THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
A HISTORY FOR THE PEOPLE

BY THE VERY REV.
H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.
DEAN OF GLOUCESTER

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THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

A HISTORY FOR THE PEOPLE

BY THE

Spence-Jones

VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.

Dean of Gloucester

VOL. I.

THE BRITISH AND ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH

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SIGILLVM

To VICTORIA, QUEEN and EMPRESS, these Chronicles of THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, *written for the People over whom She and Her Illustrious Ancestors have ruled for more than a thousand years, are by Her own gracious Permission, Dedicated.*

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The Church of England

INTRODUCTION.

IN no country of Christendom is the story of the Church so closely bound up with its national life and progress as in England: in no other country has it played so prominent a part. Among the various influences that have combined to make the England of the nineteenth century, with its boundless power and its measureless responsibilities, the Church must rank as the first and chiefest.

Very dim are the memories of the first two or three hundred years of the life of the Church in our island, for a great and crushing calamity passed over the Britain known to the Roman Empire. A long-drawn-out invasion, a cruel conquest, such as perhaps no other Christian land has been subjected to, swept away well-nigh every vestige of its work, almost every trace of its life. The patient zeal of the lynx-eyed antiquary, and the painful industry of the tireless scholar, just enable us to gather memories sufficient to give an outlined picture of a storied past; but the hands of ruthless destroyers have effectually prevented us from giving any more than a faint sketch of the Church as it existed while the Romans dwelt in our midst, and during the prolonged period of awful conquest and destruction that ensued when the Roman armies had finally left us.

The story then goes on to a period richer in materials for a writer, during which the Church of the conquered became the Church of the conquerors. It tells us how Rome, with her immemorial traditions and restless energy, first endeavoured to make the victorious Anglo-Saxons Christian, but how from various causes her noble efforts made but little way among the pagan North-folk in England. Then it becomes brighter and more animated, as it unfolds to us how missionaries of the race of the vanquished Britons, from Scotland and Ireland, were completely successful where Rome had failed, and then relates how, after their

success, Rome came again upon the scene, and showed the Northmen, now become Christians, how to build up and to organise a really great church in England. The tale grows more and more marvellous, as it tells us how intensely earnest were many of these pagan conquerors, converted to the faith of the people they had conquered, for the cause of the Christ they had learnt to love; how Christianity flourished and developed among them; how a Church with its wide and blessed influences, with its far-reaching civilising power, grew up in this distant and remote island, so learned that from the whole of northern and western Europe, scholars came to be instructed in all manner of secular lore as well as in religion, in the schools of Canterbury, Jarrow, and York.

Alas! that concerning this flourishing Anglo-Saxon Church we should have to tell of yet another storm which overwhelmed it for a time; a storm so desolating in its effects that it well-nigh destroyed the Church, which before this calamity was so learned, so powerful, and so beneficent. We must relate how once more England was ravaged by another race of pagan Northmen; kinsmen these new-comers —so well known as Danish Vikings—but none the less bitter and relentless foes of those Northmen who had first conquered Britain, and who, after conquering, had received with joy the religion of the men they had vanquished.

This cloud too, however, after a sad interval of misery and woe, gradually passed; and the chronicle will at this point have as its central figure one of the true heroes of our island story; one whose deeds and words in the battlefield and in the state, as well as in the Church, generation after generation have sung and told. For King Alfred the Great was not only a mighty warrior and profound statesman; he was also a great churchman, and occupies a distinct place in the history we are about to tell.

For more than a century and a half from the days of Alfred, the records we possess of the Anglo-Saxon Church are of peculiar interest to Englishmen. These records not only speak of it as powerful and united, as a mighty influence for good in the land (with its periods, of course, of special vigour and of comparative inaction), but they show us a Church remarkable for its independence, not only in government and in organisation, but also in thought. Although in communion with Western Christendom and with Latin Christianity; although admitting in a general way the authority of the Roman Pontiff; although supplying a constant stream of pilgrims to the shrines of the Eternal City, and generous contributions to the support of these English pilgrims Romewards, and even lavish gifts to the Bishop of the apostolic see; the Church of Alfred, the Church of the Saxon kings of his house, the Church of primates like Dunstan and Odo, Elfric and Stigand, was notwithstanding practically independent. She stood positively alone among Western churches in her proud insular freedom. She was free in her constitution, independent in her teaching, differing gravely from some of the teachings of Rome; resting ever upon the traditions of her own famous school of York, traditions handed down by Bede and Bede's famous masters, rather than upon the more recent developments of Roman doctrine.

As the history moves onwards, its task will now be to trace the strange and marvellous career of Norman conquest, which so powerfully influenced the course of events in the church, as in the world ; to show how it peculiarly affected our island's religious history, by uniting it for a season with the Latin Christianity of Rome and the continent of Europe, and thus depriving it of the characteristic features so dear to the Englishmen of its age—its freedom in thought and independence in government. As the great drama proceeds, it will be seen how this fusion of the Church of Alfred and of Dunstan with the widespread Latin communion of Rome and the continent of Europe, was utterly at variance with the spirit of England and her people. It will appear how soon really began that long struggle, culminating in the Reformation of the sixteenth century, which restored the Church of England to the position of independence and freedom she loves so well ; which gave back to her the precious treasure of pure and primitive doctrine which was her proud inheritance from the days of Alfred and his house—ay, and from long before Alfred—from the times of the Christian children of the Vikings, when heroes like Edwin and Oswald and Edgar played so well their part as makers of the Anglo-Saxon Church.

In the course of this story of the church so dear to every lover of England, not a few pictures must be painted of men who were chief actors in the eventful drama ; of men who have won, as they deserved, a place in the hearts of their fellow countrymen, a name in the golden book of her most illustrious and most patriotic sons. Some few of these were what men are pleased to call heroes, some fewer saints ; but all of them, saints and heroes, were full of faults, and their work was marred with errors and mistakes. Yet in spite of their faults the heroes will be seen to have been, after all, true heroes, and their work, marred though it was, good work : the saints also true saints in our own acceptation of the word, and their work, even with its earthly admixture, to have been, as we believe, acceptable to the Master.

Now and then it will be found that our portraits differ widely from the popular ideal. Dunstan, for instance, will appear different from and a grander character than the Dunstan of our child-memories, which present only the recollection of a pettish workman in his forge engaged in silly combats with the Evil One, or else picture him as an overbearing, tyrannical priest, cruel and remorseless in his selfish vengeance. Edward the Confessor, the saint king, will stand out in our pages as a venerable and a noble figure, not as the weak and vacillating, relic-loving and superstitious monarch of many historians and romancists.

Not improbably one school of critics may find fault with our description of the monastic orders, with our pictures of the saintly men who lived and worked in their fair cloisters, and prayed in their glorious abbeys—cloisters and abbeys desecrated and ruined all too soon ; perhaps may be indignant when they read our description of the splendid and successful efforts of the mendicant friars, true disciples of Francis and of Dominic, to sweeten the sad existence, and to elevate the unhappy lives of the poorer masses in the great cities of the Middle Ages. Another school will perhaps

be moved to anger as they turn over the pages of our narrative and find in it an apology for the earliest of the Reformers, Wyclif; find that this truest of Englishmen, who gave us the first English Bible, is painted, in spite of shortcomings and mistakes, as one of the noblest and most learned of our English churchmen. But our present work belongs to no one school of thought, to no party either in Church or State. It simply tells the true story as the writer found it in the ancient chronicles and memoirs; it paints the portraits of the chief actors in the drama just as they appeared to him, as he read and pondered for himself the contemporary records of their work and days.

Slowly and reluctantly we leave at last the many-coloured chronicles of the Middle Ages which tell us of the days of chivalry and knightly prowess; of holy wars—holy, alas! only in the ideal; of gorgeous pageants, lordly castles, and picturesque cities; of churches such as the world had never seen before—will perhaps never see again; which tell us of the ages when monastic orders played their great, and on the whole beneficent part in the life of the church. As we close our history of church life in the England of the Middle Ages, we pass at once into another atmosphere of thought, and it is with mingled feelings that we tell of the changes brought about by the Reformation of the sixteenth century, with its lights and shadows, so pitiful often in its details, so glorious for England in its general results.

It is but a maimed truth—indeed, it is scarcely a truth at all—which traces the Reformation in England to the fancy of King Henry VIII. for the beautiful Anne Boleyn; to his passionate desire for a divorce from the stately Spanish princess, the wife of his youth; or to the vulgar greed of the same irresponsible monarch and his powerful satellites, which coveted the spoils of the glorious abbeys, and the long-accumulated wealth of the Benedictine and his brother servants of God. These vulgar passions were, after all, but very small influences in bringing about the change which passed over the Church of England—the change men call the Reformation.

The Reformation was, in truth and reality, a Renaissance of English doctrine, English thought, English freedom in Church government. Far from having the effect which some superficial writers endeavour to ascribe to it — viz., the *destruction* of the Church in England, it resulted in the *restoration* of the Church of England. It was a period of stress and storm, of sorrow, and often of confusion; a period in which much happened that every lover of England and of religion must mourn over. But in the providence of God, when the clouds of trial and trouble had passed away, the Church of England appeared again, more English than ever; more than ever the church of the primitive ages, more truly the church of the people —the old church which even in its darkest hour was generally loved and honoured by the nation—but strengthened, purified, popularised, so to speak; more capable of the indefinite expansion and adaptability which has been its lot through the times of the dynasties of Tudor, Stuart, and Guelph; but still the Church of the living God, which, with all its shortcomings and its errors, has made our England free and

INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY INTO GREAT BRITAIN.

(From the Painting by J. R. Herbert, R.A.)

great and strong. The Reformation was the revolt of the Church of the people from a foreign yoke, which had oppressed and weakened religion, and marred its holy influence in our island for several centuries. More than this, it was an uprising of the English people against grave errors in doctrine, and strange superstitions which were blotting out not a few of the distinctive truths of the Christian faith ; errors and superstitions absolutely unknown to the primitive church.

Much happened, many events took place, in the fifteenth century in England which contributed to the momentous change of the sixteenth century. Foremost among these events was that sad war of rival dynasties, known as the Wars of the Roses, that long-drawn-out conflict between the kindred royal Houses of York and Lancaster ; that cruel war waged by Englishmen against Englishmen, stained by bloody battles, scarred by pitiless State murders. When at last the wild fury of the "Roses" war had spent itself, the mighty baronage of England was gone ; it had been literally swept away. The next class, composed of county squires, town traders, and other citizens beneath the baronage, a class which was gradually growing with the growth of England in wealth and importance, was in the fifteenth century still a comparatively new order, and more or less under the influence of the baronage. As the barons disappeared, it, too, for a time was practically effaced as a power in the State.

Thus the Church was left alone with the Sovereign, now enormously enriched by the confiscation of the estates of the fallen barons. And the Church of the fifteenth century, great and imposing and wealthy as it seemed, lacked real power. It was sadly wanting in spiritual earnestness. Lollardism in its deeper and nobler aspects had stolen away the people's hearts from the Church. Wyclif's teaching, and especially Wyclif's English Bible, had penetrated deeper into the homes of England than the hierarchy chose to think. The Church, too, had never recovered the awful losses inflicted upon it by the plague of 1349, and by subsequent visitations of the same dread scourge : the yawning gaps made by the Angel of Death in its ranks had never been really filled up. Face to face, then, with a king armed with power never possessed by the proudest and ablest of Norman, Angevin, or Plantagenet monarchs, stood the still magnificent and stately, but sorely enfeebled mediæval Church. Only these two mighty wielders of influence remained in England—the Church and the Crown—when the long and bloody rivalry of the "Roses" was hushed in the presence of the House of Tudor.

The royal power was rapidly and firmly consolidated by the first Tudor sovereign, and while he reigned, the Church grew gradually weaker. The various causes which were sapping its vitality, were ceaselessly at work ; and when his brilliant and versatile son Henry VIII. became king, all was ready for the crash of the Reformation. "The Mediæval Church of England," writes Stubbs, "stood before the self-willed dictator, too splendid in wealth, fame, and honour to be allowed to share the dominion that he claimed. It was no longer a mediator, but a competitor for power. The royal self-will itself furnished the occasion

for a struggle, and the political claims of the Church proved their weakness by the greatness of the fall." It was part of the Divine providence that at this supreme moment of the contest between the Crown, with its enormously augmented powers, and the Church, with its ancient influence so enfeebled, the throne of England was filled with such conspicuously able occupants as the Tudor sovereigns—Henry VII., Henry VIII., and Queen Elizabeth.

Strange to say, at this very moment one division of the Church's forces — the monastic orders—became powerless, or well-nigh powerless. To the Church of which during so many centuries they had been the great strength, they became a source of positive weakness ; and a faithful history of the Church, in those pages which recite the downfall in England of the Benedictine and Cistercian monks, and the mendicant friars of the Franciscan and Dominican orders, while repelling many of the false and exaggerated reports (which have been too easily believed) of their life and conduct, must still dwell upon the causes which led to their ruin and utter collapse.

Among these causes, first of all the waning power of Rome, ever the powerful patron and devoted friend of the monastic orders, must be remembered. After the removal of the home of the popes from Rome to Avignon, where for a long period the popes were purely French in policy, the national hatred of England for its old rival, France, reacted with strange force on the position of the monastic orders, who were bound to Rome by no ordinary ties. In England they never recovered the popularity which they lost in that age ; while the fast fading influence of the Papacy, consequent on the scandalous schism which followed the long Papal residence at Avignon, prevented any real assistance from being given to its too faithful monkish garrisons in our distant island.

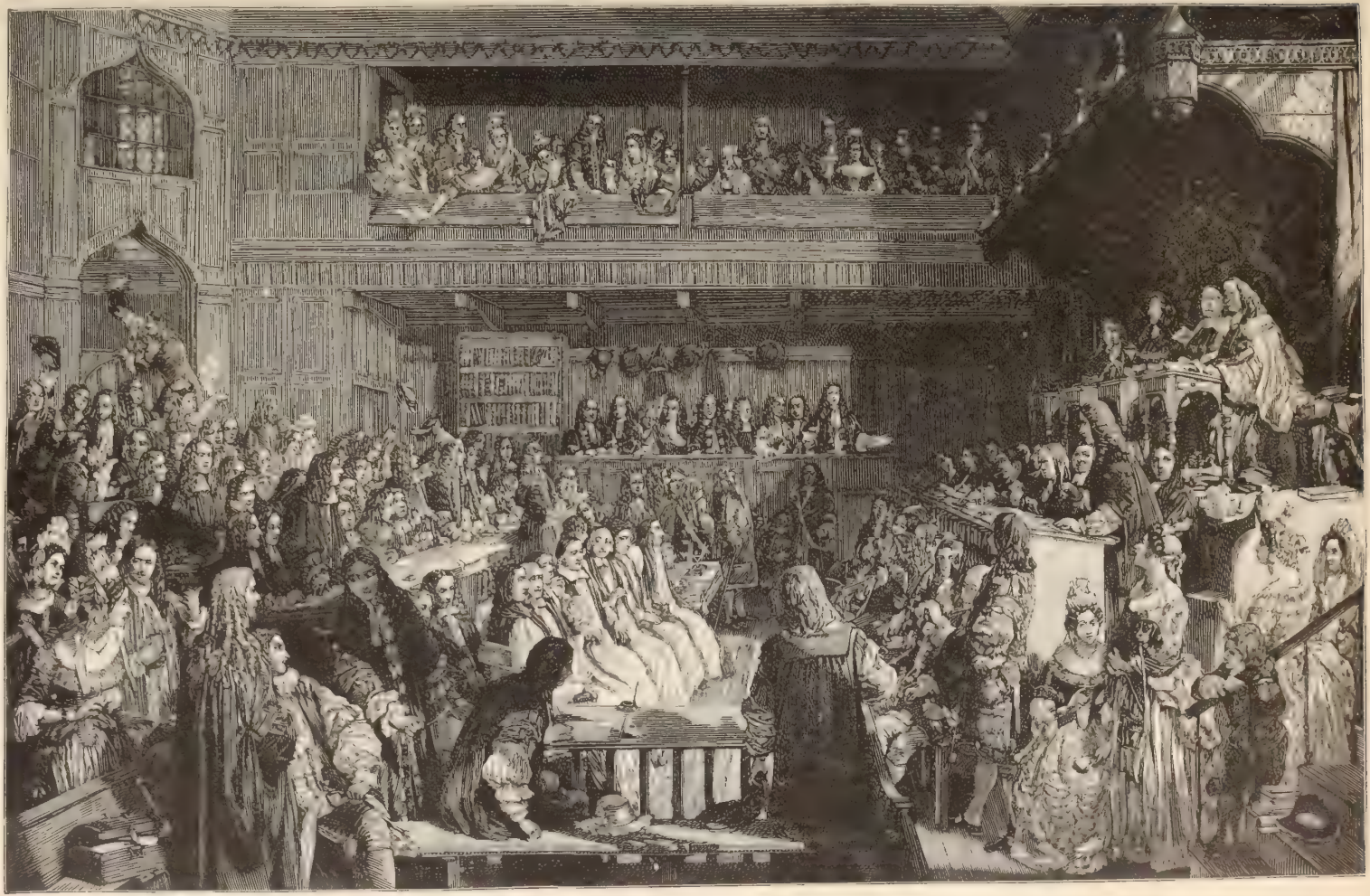
But other undreamed-of influences were working at this period against the monk and the friar. The most brilliant of French romancists pictures a scholar-priest in the days of King Louis XI., with a printed book (then a startling novelty) in his hand, gazing sorrowfully at the mighty pile of Notre Dame, at Paris — one of the noblest examples in Europe of Gothic architecture—and exclaiming, "The book will kill the building!" The prophetic words of the ecclesiastic, telling of the doom of mediæval architecture, would have been even more directly true of mediæval monasticism. In the days when the self-willed Tudor king succeeded to the throne, the work of the monastic orders was virtually done ; the need for their labour in the conservation and spread of literature, existed no longer. The printing press, which already in the early years of Henry VIII. had become a vast power, had effectually superseded the monk and the friar as a producer of books or a popular teacher. Looking back from the vantage ground of the closing years of the nineteenth century, even a true defender of the monastic orders must acknowledge that in the new world of the Tudor dynasty there was no place for the monastery of the Middle Ages, no work for monk and friar. But none the less must he regret the ways and the method by which an arbitrary king and an ungrateful people swept away a vast institution which had done such splendid work for

England and the Church. The recital of the cruel, ruthless ruin of the monastic orders will for ever be a dark page in the chronicles of that Reformation which has contributed so largely toward the making of the Church of England.

A brighter page in the momentous Reformation drama is that which tells how "Greece arose from the dead with the New Testament in her hand"; how from the fallen city of Constantinople and the ruined eastern empire, in 1453, Greek exiles brought to Italy (especially to Florence) the science and literature of the older world; how from Florence the "new learning" soon reached Oxford, and the early years of the sixteenth century witnessed the publication of the New Testament in its original language. Then arose that honoured school of critics and commentators which unfolded the long-lost meaning of many of the words and sayings of the Divine Founder of Christianity, and so helped the patient scholars of the Reformation to restore to the teaching of the Church the primitive doctrines of our most holy faith.

The Reformation necessarily occupies a considerable space in our history, a space out of proportion to the time occupied by the events specially connected with it. For its importance cannot be over-estimated. It rudely tore away the veil which Lanfranc and the Normans had so carefully thrown over the ancient teaching and practices of the Anglo-Saxon Church—teaching and practices mostly based on an immemorial antiquity—whose obscuration had been, on the whole, ever strange to and unloved by the English people. But the recital is by no means concluded when it has told how the yoke of Rome was shaken off. The Marian reaction in favour of mediæval Christianity and foreign guidance, which immediately followed, is an interesting and instructive episode, but it is only an episode. The reign of Mary's sister and successor, Elizabeth, however, is a period of the highest importance in the making of the Church of England, scarcely second in interest to the reign of Henry VIII., who commenced the Reformation work. Forced almost against her will, by the circumstances of her environment, to be a Protestant queen, the last and noblest of the Tudors, with her learned and scholarly advisers, revised the Anglican formularies of religion, and somewhat sullenly accepted the position, since filled by all who followed her on the British throne, as supreme governor on earth of the Church of England.

Another curious and striking study will be the tracing of the rise of the two great parties into which the people of the reformed Church soon divided themselves—the Puritans and the High Church Anglicans. Under the now well-known names of Churchmen and Nonconformists, these parties exist to this day, with many and varied developments, somewhat as they were when Elizabeth the Tudor and James and Charles the Stuarts were sovereigns. The Puritans, it will be seen, taking advantage of the unpopularity of the Anglican party under leaders of the school of Laud, gained for a time the upper hand, and in the days of the Commonwealth, tyrannised with an unloved tyranny over the religious life of England; but, although in some respects their peculiar doctrines and teaching answered



"THE ACQUITTAL OF THE SEVEN BISHOPS," 1688.
(From the Painting by J. R. Herbert, R.A.)

to men's higher aspirations, it is clear that the Puritans never found the key to English hearts. After a brief supremacy, they in their turn gave way to the supporters of what is generally known as the Anglican system, restored by the great divines of the Tudor Sovereigns after the model of primitive tradition ; the complete independence of the Church from all Roman and foreign interference, however, ever forming a prominent feature in this Anglican system, which has been accepted as the national religion of our country.

The existence, however, of a large body of earnest and religious men outside the pale of the Church of England, but inside the broader pale of the Church of Christ, must never be ignored by the fair historian. While deploring the schism which separates so many devout souls from the communion of our national Church, and grieving over the partial blindness which veils from their eyes the beauty and the strength of our great historic Church of England—the Church of Aidan and Cuthbert, of Wilfrid and Dunstan, of Anselm and Langton, of Grosseteste and Wyclif, of Cranmer and Ridley, of Hooker and Pearson—the faithful and loyal churchman will never forget to do justice to the successors of the sturdy and honest, though mistaken Puritans, who did good work and true in the days of the unhappy Stuarts, and who in our day and time are fighting in noble rivalry with the Church of England in the never-ending campaign against sin and shame, against the abominations and corruptions of the heathen world, both at home and beyond the seas. The presence of the true and spiritual Nonconformist among us is a source of strength, not of weakness, to the Church whose eventful history is to be told in these pages.

The concluding chapters of our work must relate the last important revival of Church life in England. Not once or twice in the long and many-coloured history, the melancholy record of decay in spiritual fervour and intellectual activity occurs and recurs ; a decay, however, always succeeded by a period of splendid activities and reawakened zeal and devotion. Such a golden period of reawakened devotion and energy has occurred in this present nineteenth century, shared in alike by both the great parties into which the Anglican Church is divided. It has been shared in by the earnest men who love and reverence the traditions of their saintly fathers with a beautiful and touching devotion, which perhaps now and again shades into something like superstition, and even formalism ; shared in also by those who, while fervent lovers of Christ and imitators of His servant Paul, are perhaps too ready to despise traditions, however holy, and customs and rites, however saintly and venerable. The present golden age of spiritual fervour and intellectual activity is the outcome of the restless work alike of High Churchmen and Low Churchmen, whose healthy rivalry is not the least among the sources of the life and power of the immemorial Church of England, and both of whom alike share her heritage of the past.

CHAPTER I.

THE BEGINNINGS OF BRITISH CHRISTIANITY.

Obscurity of Early British Church History—St. Alban, the first British Martyr—Subsequent Prosperity of the British Church—Early Legends as to its Origin—Historical Notices—Traces of the Early Church—Reasons for their Scarcity—Ruthless Character of the Anglo-Saxon Conquest, and almost complete Extermination of Christianity in England.

"THE Church of Britain, for the first three hundred years of its existence shows like a valley wrapt in mists, across which some fitful lights irregularly gleam."* One of those rare gleams of light is the beautiful story of St. Alban, which helps us in some measure to understand the history of the last years of the third century. It is one of the many striking records of brave and patient suffering for the Christian faith which are treasured up in different lands—records which, for the most part, have a foundation of truth underlying the superstructure of marvellous and incredible events often piled by later chroniclers over the first true, simple story. In this instance the legend, no doubt, faithfully represented an incident in the Decian, or in one of the later persecutions of Christians in our island.

The great Norman abbey of St. Albans, still in its scarred but stately beauty one of the glories of England, replaced in the far back twelfth century a yet older sanctuary. History tells us how Offa, king of the Mercians, in the year of our Lord 793, had established on the spot a famous monastery which, owing to its sacred tradition, possessed peculiar privileges. Offa, no doubt, built his monks' home round the "beautiful church" which Bede writes of some fifty years before Offa's days. The vast and splendid Norman abbey, the monastic buildings of Offa, the "beautiful church of Bede," marked in succession the sacred spot where the first Christian martyr in Britain of whom we possess a record, in pain and suffering passed to his rest.

The story as Bede tells it, when stripped of its useless marvellous adjuncts, is a simple one. A Christian presbyter in Britain, proscribed and hunted down by the stern edict emanating from the seat of government in Rome, asked hospitality and a temporary refuge from a Roman-British provincial named Alban, living in Verulam. Dean Milman believes Alban to have been a Roman officer stationed there. From the first day, many of these Roman soldiers seem to have been kindly disposed to the "Faith." Like the centurion who guarded the Divine Martyr on the cross, and bowed in much reverence as he watched the brave and patient sufferer, so Alban was touched to the heart by the conduct of the

* Prof. Bright.

proscribed and hunted Christian whom he sheltered and concealed. He soon adopted with intense earnestness the religion of his guest; and when the messenger of the Government discovered the poor presbyter's hiding-place, and peremptorily demanded that Alban should give him up, then charged with the grave offence of attempting to conceal a proscribed and sacrilegious rebel against the Emperor. Alban not only refused to betray the hiding-place of his guest, but publicly declared that he, too, was one of the proscribed Christians. The Roman judge then

Photo: Chester Vaughan, Acton, W.

ST. ALBANS ABBEY.

Alban refused. The Roman soldier's arrest naturally followed.

The scene of the trial was a striking one. Led into the presence of the Imperial magistrate, who was sitting surrounded by all the stately insignia with which Rome was in the habit of investing her great officers, the altar of sacrifice before him, the statue of the Emperor and the images of the gods were solemnly brought into the magistrate's presence; the incense and the wine to accompany the supplication were placed ready. The soldier Alban was urged him to purge himself of his crime against the State, by sprinkling incense on the altar before the images of the Emperor and the gods adored by Rome. Alban refused, boldly saying, "I am a Christian, and I worship and adore the true and living God, Who created all things." Persisting in his refusal, he was scourged. He bore the torture of that cruel punishment patiently, says the old record, or "rather joyfully, for our Lord's sake," and was then led out to death. His head was struck off in a spot called Holmhurst—a woody

place, where the "beautiful church" was afterwards built to his memory, and where now the grey and massive Abbey of St. Albans stands.

of both sexes suffered, who, when they had endured sundry torments, and their limbs had been torn after an unheard-of manner, yielded their souls up, to enjoy in the

TRIAL OF ST ALBAN (*p.* 12)

The same old writer,* to whom we owe so many pages of true history, closes his little recital of the memorable death of the martyr, by relating how in the same dread persecution in Britain, "many more heavenly city a reward for the sufferings they had passed through." He further relates how "after a time the storm of persecution ceased, and the faithful Christians of our island 'rebuilt the churches levelled to the ground,' celebrating festivals,

* Bede

and performing their sacred rites with clean heart and mouth; and how the peace continued in the churches of Britain until the day of the Arian madness, which, having corrupted the whole world, infected this island also." This peace in the churches continued for nearly a century after the martyrdom of St. Alban, until about A.D. 394, when the disputes connected with the heresy of Pelagius* on the subject of man's free-will began to distract the Church of Britain.

What now do we know of the laying of the early stones of this Christianity, which must have taken so great a hold upon the Roman-British provincials long before the close of the third century, when the great persecution we have just been speaking of harried so cruelly Christian Britain, levelling its many churches to the ground?

The beautiful mediæval romance which tells us how St. Philip sent his friend Joseph of Arimathæa from Gaul into Britain, belongs to a Norman school of teachers. No Saxon writer alludes to it. William of Malmesbury, who tells the story, relates how Joseph of Arimathæa, with twelve companions, fixed himself at Glastonbury, then called Ynis-vitryn, the Glassy Isle. It was encompassed by watery marshes and sluggish streams. There, the legend goes on to say, Joseph made his staff take root in the earth and grow into the famous Holy Thorn. From Glastonbury as a centre, the faith of Christ spread over the island. Though this legend apparently owes its genesis, or at least its preservation, to Norman sources in the twelfth century, it is certain that Glastonbury had been a place renowned for sanctity many generations before the Norman Conquest; it was evidently a famous sanctuary as early as the fifth century. We hear of the greatest and most successful of the Celtic missionaries, St. Patrick, making it for a time his home; and, as some think, it contains his grave.

But though the preaching of Joseph of Arimathæa in Britain belongs to legendary history, there is no doubt but that Christianity was introduced into Britain at a very early period. Tertullian's statement, written as early as A.D. 196-201, that "places in Britain not yet visited by Romans were subjected to Christ," shows that the great North African scholar believed that Christianity had already penetrated even beyond the limits of Roman conquest in Britain. It must be remembered that when Tertullian wrote *scarcely one hundred years had elapsed since St. John had passed away.* As early as A.D. 314 there is no doubt that three British bishops, attended by an equal number of presbyters and deacons, were present at the great Council of Arles, in the south of France, and their signatures are appended to the canons enacted at that famous assembly. This would indicate that, two hundred years after the death of St. John, not only was Christianity

* This Pelagius was a native of our island, probably a monk, but attached to no community; he taught and wrote at the end of the fourth and in the early years of the fifth century. His heresy consisted in the affirmation of the "Freedom of the Human Will," in opposition to the Catholic teaching of the "Power of Divine Grace." His most famous opponent has been St. Augustine. The Pelagian tenets were condemned, with more or less severity, in various provincial Councils and Synods, and formally by the voice of the Catholic Church in the General Council of Ephesus, A.D. 431.

known in Britain, but that a formally-organised church, with a regular hierarchy, existed in the island. Only a few years later, British bishops probably were present at the Church councils of Sardica* and of Ariminium.† Bede also relates how a little earlier in the same century, A.D. 304, the persecution of the Emperor Diocletian reached Britain, and how many persons there, with the constancy of martyrs, died in the confession of their faith. The same historian, too, dwells on the fact that numbers of the faithful in Britain, in the course of this persecution, hid themselves in woods and caves, and that these, after the time of trial was ended, appeared again in public, and rebuilt their churches which had been levelled with the ground.

Such notices as these, by writers in different lands, the records of chroniclers of church councils, and others, amply justify the historian's deliberate opinion that "there can be no doubt that conquered and half-civilised Britain, like the rest of the Roman Empire, gradually received through the second and third centuries the faith of Christ; the depth of her Christian cultivation appears from her fertility in saints and heretics."‡ The rare and somewhat doubtful legends which speak of the beginnings of British Christianity are, after all, of little importance in the face of facts like these, which tell us authoritatively that a considerable Christian church existed in Britain from very early days, though the exact circumstances in which the first preachers of the faith carried on their work in the island are, and must remain, unknown.

One tradition seems never to have been absent from the early British church; it comes out again and again, and in some way accounts for the strange obstinacy with which they held to certain peculiar rites and customs, which differed from the general rites and customs of western Christendom. The British Christians traced these peculiar practices—of small interest in themselves, but which, as we shall see, in the seventh and eighth centuries acquired a fictitious importance in the unhappy rivalry between the Celtic and Roman churches—to the teaching of St. John and his pupils. It is, therefore, highly probable that the Roman-British provincials received the faith in the first instance from men who came from Jerusalem or Ephesus—from men who had listened to the voice of John. The legend of Joseph of Arimathæa at Glastonbury, not improbably was originally part of the same ancient tradition.

Another curious and interesting fact in connection with these few early memories of the church in Britain is its cordial alliance with the native Druidism—that strange mystic faith with which the first missionaries must have come into daily contact. A kind of alliance seems to have existed between Christianity and Druidism; the Christian teachers evidently took possession of the holy places of the island, consecrating them to a new and a better worship. Bangor, a name appropriated in Britain and in Ireland to several famous and ancient monastic foundations, signifies, according to many interpretations, "the Great Circle," thus connecting these places

* Sofia in Bulgaria.

† Rimini.

‡ Dean Milman: "Latin Christianity."

with Druidical worship and Druidical remains, and showing how Christianity had occupied and superseded them. The close connection between the Druid bard and the Christian teacher will appear when we come to relate the dark story of the fifth and sixth centuries, when the

ST. JOSEPH'S CHAPEL, GLASTONBURY.

Anglo-Saxons were doing their hard and cruel work in Britain.

After the great Decian persecution had ceased, the story of the British church emerges into a partial light out of the obscurity which had hitherto veiled it. In the year 305 the Emperor Diocletian, wearied with absolute power, carried out a long cherished design, and, abdicating, retired for rest into his beautiful villa-palace of Salona, on the Adriatic. Constantius and Galerius, who, as assistant-emperors—each bearing the title of Cæsar—had been rulers in a subordinate capacity, now divided the vast Empire. Constantius' share was the West; and, though he carried out the persecuting edicts of Diocletian, he is described even by Christian writers as a man of courtesy and clemency. On succeeding to supreme power, however, he professed himself a Christian, and under the sunshine of Imperial favour, the churches ruined during the late persecution were rebuilt, and the scattered congregations were again permitted to worship publicly. Constantius himself soon died (A.D. 306), and was buried at York (Eboracum), but Constantine, his son, the Christian Emperor, succeeded. His mother, the famous Helena, was probably of British lineage ; some suppose her to have been the daughter of a British prince, but more trustworthy tradition relates that she sprang from the people. We still possess no formal record of the British church, but the presence, already alluded to, of British bishops at the Council of Arles (A.D. 314), at that of Sardica in 347, and at that of Ariminium in A.D. 359, tells us that the British church was reckoned in the first half of the fourth century as a power in Christendom.

Hilary of Poitiers indeed congratulates his British brethren on their freedom from all contagion of the heresy of Arius.* St.

* The distinctive tenet of this heretic's teaching was "the denial of the Saviour's godhead." Arius himself taught in the early years of the fourth century; his doctrines were formally condemned in the first General Council of Nice, A.D. 325. His views, and a modification of them under the general title of Semi-Arianism, have appeared and reappeared in all the Christian ages, but have ever met with the sternest condemnation on the part of the Catholic Church. The present "Unitarians" hold the same doctrinal views, but possess only a very limited influence compared with the Arians of the patristic age.

Athanasius alludes to the inhabitants of the island as among his orthodox supporters, as among those faithful ones who, when many fell away, remained steadfastly loyal to the Catholic faith. St. Chrysostom, too, writes of the British Isles as professing the Christian faith, and especially

Pictish tribes, a missionary establishment known as the White House (Candida Casa). It was this Ninian—of whose life and labours we possess scarcely any information—who in after times, strangely enough, was revered as the apostle of the southern Picts. He died in 432.

ASSEMBLING FOR DRUIDICAL WORSHIP.

mentions the churches and altars there erected. St. Jerome also names our island with approval; "for Britain," he says, "worships the same Christ, observes the same rule of truth with other Christian countries."

Early in the fifth century we read of Ninian, a native of the Cumbrian district in North Britain, after having studied at Rome, erecting in the wild districts of the south of Scotland, on the promontory called Whithorne, the home of the marauding

This is well-nigh all the history we possess of the British church of the first days. We have, however, enough of these scant relics to assure us of its existence. It was probably numerous and influential; it was certainly earnest and devoted. It possessed a regular organisation; it was ruled by bishops who were acknowledged as the successors of the Apostles by the great churches of Western Christendom; but we possess no details, on which we can

certainly depend, of its history, or of the position which it held among the Roman officials or soldiers.

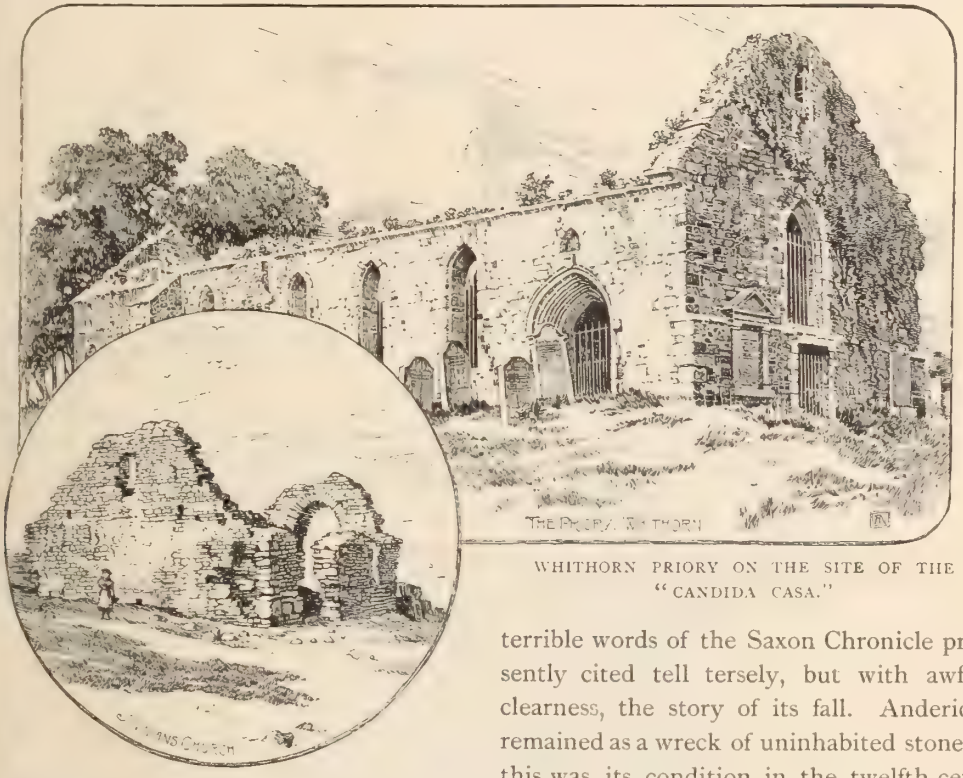
The visible traces of Roman-British Christianity in the England with which we are acquainted are few indeed. A few stones marked with the Christian monogram in Roman Villas, a few tiles marked I.H.S., here and there a tombstone recording that a Christian slept below, complete the scanty list. Traces of some ecclesiastical Romano-British work have been discovered at Lyminge in Kent, and at Brixworth. In the excavations at Silchester, near Reading—destroyed in the sixth century, probably by Ceawlin, the West-Saxon King—the foundations, fairly perfect, of a British church of the fourth and fifth century have been found, with the sanctuary pavement intact (p. 19), and similar precious "finds" may with tolerable certainty be looked for. But up to the present time very scanty are the gleanings of British remains which can with any certainty be identified as Christian; though, in spite of the scanty contemporary historical mention and the fewness of relics of ancient British Christianity, we have good reason to believe that the British church before the coming of the North-folk was a flourishing and influential community, well instructed in Divine truth, earnest and devout. The reasons for this belief will be more properly dealt with and discussed as the story of the Church proceeds.

The paucity of relics of our ancient church can easily be accounted for. Over our island in the fifth and sixth centuries swept a desolating flood of barbarian conquerors, who, in their slow but cruel march—it lasted roughly 150 to 200 years—spared nothing; all was destroyed. The old life of Britain—its cities, its people, its faith—vanished as though it had never existed. Only a poor remnant of the people, carrying with them their faith, had found a refuge in the west of the island (including Devon and Cornwall), and in Cumberland (Strathclyde). It will be deeply interesting to see what they carried with them of Christianity, when we come to speak of these dispossessed ones in detail.

Men are coming at length to see—now that the awful scenes of the Northmen's invasion are fairly studied among us—that the British people who were swept away by the invaders were not that timorous easily-conquered folk most men have imagined them. Their struggle against the barbarian was no weak and unworthy one. "Nowhere throughout the whole circuit of the Roman world, was so long, so desperate a resistance offered to the assailants of the Empire as by Britain." A popular belief ascribes if not cowardice, at least supineness to the British inhabitants of our island after the departure of the Roman legionaries; and the northern invaders are generally supposed to have had, on the whole, an easy task before them when they proceeded to take possession of the country. The contrary, however, was the case. Of all the nations under the dominion of the Roman Empire, it is the Britons alone whose long and bitter struggle with the northern barbarian has a history; and that history lasted well-nigh two centuries.

The chronicles of that dreary period are most meagre, but taken into account with the ruins which we can still trace,

it is clear that every district was hotly fought for. Farm by farm, village by village, town by town, was only won after stubborn fighting. The defenders—at least, as many as survived the bloody work—suddenly withdrew a little space, and then stoutly endeavoured again to stay the conqueror's onward march. The fault in the resistance of the allied British-Provincials was want of union among themselves, not lack of patriotism or of splendid courage.



RUINS OF ANCIENT CHURCH (ON THE ISLAND OF WHITHORN LOCALLY KNOWN AS ST. NINIAN'S CHURCH).
(*Photos: Messrs. W. Hunter & Son, Newton-Stewart.*)

The prolonged and stubborn defence of the British people left only burned and desolate towns. "Every Roman station and house in the north shows traces of having been destroyed by fire."* Similar havoc and utter destruction can be traced in the south and midlands. The fate of Anderida in Sussex is a good instance of the doom of the southern cities. The terrible words of the Saxon Chronicle presently cited tell tersely, but with awful clearness, the story of its fall. Anderida remained as a wreck of uninhabited stones: this was its condition in the twelfth century; its square of walls remains lonely and uninhabited still.

WHITHORN PRIORY ON THE SITE OF THE "CANDIDA CASA."

Nowhere perhaps in the island, though, do we possess so striking an object-lesson, teaching us the pathetic details of the true story of the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum), the famous Roman-British city near our modern Reading. A vast weird wall of remote

* Canon Raine.

antiquity—imposing still in its ruin—encloses a large area of ploughed land, golden in the summer months with waving corn. The patient industry of modern antiquaries has uncovered parts of the enclosure surrounded by these ancient walls, and with little difficulty we can trace the foundations of the streets, the shops, the temples, cities were utterly destroyed : this was especially the case in the east and south. The very memory of the people had perished. The British tongue, the language of the mass of the people even under Roman rule, though it lived on as the tongue of the fugitives in Wales and the remote West, has left hardly a trace in England proper.

Photo: S. V. White, Reading.

EXCAVATED REMAINS OF AN EARLY BRITISH CHURCH, SILCHESTER.

the forum, the basilica of the once flourishing Silchester, showing well-nigh everywhere the marks of the terrible fire which no doubt closely followed the sack and plunder of the renowned Roman-British city.

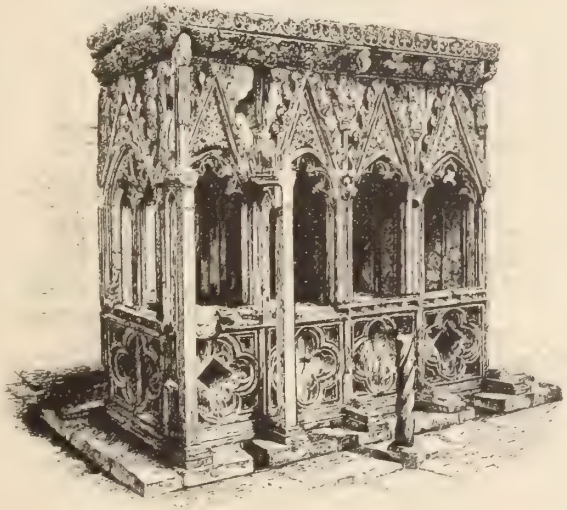
The fate of Silchester was the fate of every city east of the Severn, in southern, in middle and eastern England. The result of the Anglo-Saxon invasion was that well-nigh every Roman and every Briton vanished out of the land. Their

What now of *the faith?* What of that Christianity which had lived and flourished for some four hundred years in Britain? "Nothing brings home to us so vividly the change which had passed over the conquered country, as the *entire disappearance* of the older religion." When Rome long afterwards sought to renew its contact with Britain, it was as with a heathen country. When missionaries at last made their way into its bounds, there is no record of their having found a single

Christian ; in the whole of the conquered land (east of the Severn) Christianity had disappeared. The church, and the organisation of the church, had vanished as though it had never been. This will account for the extreme paucity of relics of the ancient British Church.

To dwell again for an instant on one detail of the vanished church, it is true that Church historians largely attribute the absence of the Celtic saints among the dedications of the Saxon and Norman churches, to the influence of Bishop Wilfrid, of Archbishop Theodore, and of the Roman school in the seventh and eighth centuries. There is no doubt but that between the Celtic disciples of the great Irish and Scottish missionaries Columba and Aidan, and those who received their Christianity from Roman teachers, such as Augustine, Paulinus, and Wilfrid, a bitter animosity existed ; and as the Roman school gradually became supreme in the latter half of the seventh century, many harsh measures, intended to obliterate Celtic influence in the church, were devised by the ever-growing party of Rome. Yet this animosity would never account for the complete wiping out of all vestiges of the old British Christianity. Nothing but the unexampled character of the Anglo-Saxon conquest could have accomplished so complete a work of obliteration.

We have, therefore, from the absence of visible remains, or the paucity of contemporary records, no grounds for entertaining the too common idea that the British Church before the coming of the Saxon and the Angle, was either numerically weak, or deficient in organisation, or of small influence or importance. We cannot endorse the words of a famous historian of our Church, who considers "that Christianity had struck but feeble roots in the land before the coming of the Northmen."



ST. ALBAN'S SHRINE, ST. ALBANS ABBEY.

CHAPTER II.

THE ANCIENT BRITISH CHURCH DURING THE ANGLO-SAXON CONQUEST.

Invasion of England by the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes, A.D. 449-485—Terrible and complete Extermination of the British Inhabitants—Sources of Information concerning that Period—Sack of a City described by Gildas—The British Bards—Their Testimony to Christian Faith and Organisation—And to Corruption of Life and Manners among the Britons.

AT the close of the sixth century the borderland of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes * ran from Ettrick across Cheviot, along the Yorkshire moors to the Peak of Derbyshire ; thence by the Forest of Arden to the mouth of the Severn ; then across the Severn estuary by Mendip through the woods of Dorset to the sea. Britain was virtually conquered and parcelled out. The wild land to westward and northward, whither the remnant of the Britons had taken refuge, had little to tempt the invader.

The Roman legions were finally withdrawn by the Emperor Honorius about A.D. 409. It was about forty years after their departure that the terrible northerners began their conquest in real earnest. The Jutes, under Hengist and Horsa, landed in the Isle of Thanet in 449. By the year 475 Kent was completely conquered ; Ella and the south Saxons had overrun Sussex before 491. During the same period the East Saxons had made themselves masters of the country north of the mouth of the Thames ; the Angles, in 480, conquered all the district of the east known subsequently as East Anglia. The latter tribe very soon afterwards penetrated northward, and founded Angle or Engle kingdoms stretching from the Firth of Forth to the river Humber. Another division of these Angles had subjugated Middle England—afterwards known as Mercia, by the year 560. In the meantime, between A.D. 514 and 552, the West Saxons, under Cerdic and Cynric, slowly drove the Britons westward. The pitched battle of Deorham, in 577, followed by the fall and sack of the cities of Bath,

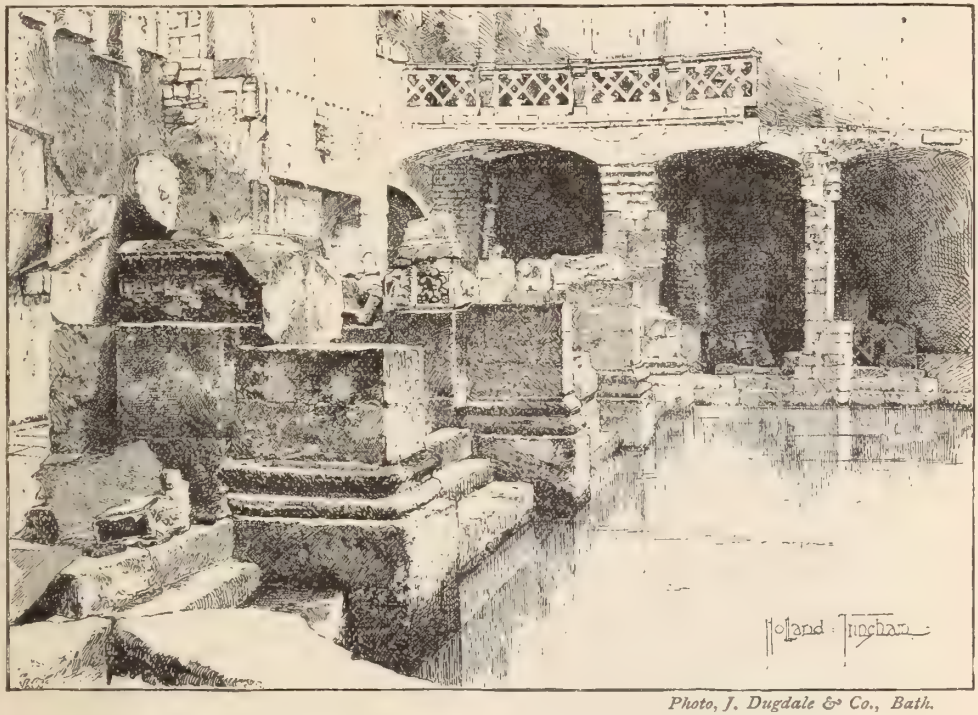
* The geographical signification of these tribal names is given at length on page 112, chapter VI. On the term *Angle*, we would observe that the spellings "Angle" or "Engle" are interchangeable. They are used to designate the same people, who dwelt originally along the Elbe and on the banks of the Weser, and also on the narrow neck of land which parts the Baltic from the North Sea. These "Angles," or "Engles," roughly made up the conquering tribes who occupied Northumbria and Deira (Yorkshire), Middle Britain (Mercia), and the eastern counties (East Anglia). It is not possible to adopt always the same term when speaking of them, for the terms Engle-land, England, Englishman, compel us frequently to use the word "Engle"; while such widely used and comprehensive expressions as Anglo-Saxon, Anglican, etc., seem to call us back to the other name "Angle." Again, the settlers in that great district of our island known as the Eastern Counties, have given to that district the name of East Anglia, an appellation current among us to this day.

Gloucester, and Cirencester, threw the western part of the island open to the invaders, and before A.D. 585 the conquest of the west country was completed.

Such a bald chronicle of the successive landings of fresh hordes of North-folk, of bloody battles, of sieges, and the fall and

A.D. 456. This year, Hengist and Æsc slew four troops of Britons with the edge of the sword in the place which is named Creecanford [Crayford].

A.D. 457. This year, Hengist and Æsc his son fought against the Britons, and slew there [at Crayford] four thousand men, and the Britons then forsook Kent, and fled to London.



Photo, J. Dugdale & Co., Bath.

EXCAVATED REMAINS OF ROMAN BATH AT BATH.

ruin of fair cities, tells curtly the long-drawn-out agony of the British in their unequal conflict. The Saxon Chronicle, copied probably from contemporary records in the scriptorium or writing-chamber of the monastery at Winchester, if referred to, would add but little further information save perhaps some such harrowing details, couched in the fewest possible words, as these following :—

A.D. 491. This year Aella and Cissa besieged Andredceaster [Anderida in Sussex], and slew all that dwelt therein, so that not a single Briton was there left.

A.D. 577. This year Cuthwine and Ceawlin the West-Saxons fought against the Britons, and they slew three kings, Conmail, and Candidan and Farinmael, at the place which is called Deorham, and took three cities from them, Gloucester, Cirencester, and Bath.

Reading these short, dreary descriptions,

the student hurries quickly on, forgetting what a scene of utter misery and desolation is covered by the curt record of the fall of Anderida, where *all* that were within that hapless city perished by famine, or the sword, or in the flames of their ruined houses. Four lines are sufficient to describe the stricken field of Deorham, which sealed the fate of the west of Britain, and to paint the sack and destruction of the three beautiful cities of Bath, Gloucester, and Cirencester. Bath and Gloucester from various causes recovered after a century of desolation, the "awful morrow" of the fight at Deorham. Cirencester never won back its old position, and remains a small country town to this day —about a third of its former size.

But what of *the Church of Britain* during these awful days? What is its eventful story during these 150 years of perhaps the most cruel and most desolating conquest recorded in history? It must be remembered that the country after the conquest showed no sign of British or Roman life; that in the history we owe to Bede, written shortly after the Northmen had finished their terrible work, we meet with no British or Roman names at all; that amidst the hundreds of men and women whom Bede records as living and acting in the new England there is not one whose name is not certainly English; that as the conquest passed over them, the towns of Roman Britain sank into ruins; that with this desolating conquest the British towns all disappear. The language of the Britons also vanished. The Celtic words in our earlier English are few, and mostly words of domestic use, such as basket, which may well have crept in from the female slaves who must here and there have been seized by the invaders. And as with the names and towns and language, so too with the faith of Britain: *it perished utterly*.

What now is the true story of this vanishing away of British Christianity? That it existed once, a mighty influence, we shall be able to show from the meagre relics of its literature; that it was once strong, and full of noble purpose and restless striving, we are in a still stronger position to assert, as we can point to the enduring work and matchless energy of the poor fugitives who, after a splendid and protracted resistance, escaped, few in number and stripped of everything but their faith, into the desolate fastnesses of the wild and barren west. The resurrection and life of the Celtic church after the crushing disaster which apparently overwhelmed it with complete and utter ruin, is, indeed, a story worth telling—a story which no Englishman can surely read unmoved; without, indeed, a thrill of pride and thankfulness.

We possess four well-known and authentic documents; the first of them written during the terrible events which took place in the course of the 150 years of the conquest of the Britons, by one who was evidently an eye-witness of the deeds and disasters of which he writes; the other three composed shortly after the events in question, when information was procurable from eye-witnesses, or from those who had conversed with eye-witnesses of at least a portion of the tragedy. The first are the works of Gildas. They consist of two pieces—the *Historia* and the *Epistola*—but they may be viewed as

forming one treatise. The second, third, and fourth consist of the History of Nennius, the earlier portion of the Saxon Chronicle, and the important History of Bede.

But besides these three often-quoted histories and the meagre earlier records of the Saxon Chronicle, there exist a few poems of great antiquity in the ancient dialect of Wales, whose theme is the war between the Britons and their Saxon and Angle foes. The poems are few in number, and the more ancient songs might be contained in the compass of a small volume. They are the work professedly of three bards, who lived and wrote in the sixth century; and the poems are, in the majority of cases, probably the work of men who seem to have been eye-witnesses of the events they sing. If these are genuine in such a story as we are now telling they are, of course, of the highest value and of the deepest interest.

LANDING OF THE JUTES.

The foundation stories of the famous mediæval Arthurian romance appear in them, and the *real* King Arthur, who lived and warred in the first quarter of the sixth century, is found among the British heroes of our ancient songs; but he is a very

different Arthur from the blameless king who is the centre figure of the various Arthurian romances of the Trouveurs of the brilliant court of Henry II. in the twelfth century. In the old bardic poems here referred to, Arthur is spoken of as a well-known and famous warrior-king; but he is only one —and not even the favourite one—of a group of chieftains who warred in those desperate but hopeless campaigns; indeed, only five of our poems mention him at all. But one fact is deserving of special notice, the Arthur of "Nennius" and of the "bardic songs" is pre-eminently a Christian leader.

The ancient poems to which we are here referring as contemporary pieces of history,* are mostly descriptive of battle scenes; several of them are death-songs of famous chiefs. They are deeply coloured with profound melancholy; they breathe throughout a hopeless lamentation for the calamities of a ruined people; scarcely a ray of hope lights up these sombre and melancholy folk-songs, whose sad burden throughout is lamentation and mourning and woe. We feel that they are mutilated, here and there altered, often re-edited, even re-cast; at times the old dialect is untranslatable; but, notwithstanding these drawbacks, they possess a peculiar beauty of their own, a passionate and a restless force and power like no other known poetry. They tell the story of the awful agony of the Britons in a way no dry chronicle, no mere historical memoirs, could hope to do. The reader who patiently studies these strange songs feels they are the real outcome of the hearts of patriot sharers in the deadly war; for the poet, while dwelling in weird, and even at times in glowing language, upon the splendid devotion of his national heroes, never attempts to conceal their weaknesses, never tries to draw a veil over their mistakes, their backsliding, their sins. No language is too glowing when the ancient British song-men hymn the prowess and the splendid valour of their heroic fellow-countrymen; but no words are too severe when they deplore the vices which these truth-telling lovers of their lost country were conscious had much to do with the fatal national disasters. Only British eye-witnesses of the deeds and disasters—the theme of these strange poems—could possibly have drawn such a picture as these bardic folk-songs present to us.

But the important witness which these contemporary poets of the long-drawn-out war which resulted in the conquest of Britain, bear to the Christianity of the British people before the conquest of the Anglo-Saxon, is what we have here especially to dwell on. The patriot bards of the sixth and seventh centuries were evidently Christians, writing of and to Christian people.

Gildas (*circa* 550-560)—the genuineness of whose history is now absolutely undoubted, and who wrote, too, with

* The question of the critical value of these war songs of the Bards, is discussed at some length in Excursus A, "The Contemporary Authorities for the history of the Church of Britain in the 6th and 7th centuries," at the end of the volume. While on the one hand the rare MSS. containing them belong to a post-Norman age, the internal evidence supplied by the poems themselves is of such a nature as to enable scholars to agree in the main with the conclusions of Sharon Turner, Dr. Guest, Villemarqué, Mr. Green, and Professor Skene, who use some of these poems as authentic pieces of contemporary history.

the authority of an eye-witness of some of the scenes he chronicles—describes, in words somewhat turgid and rhetorical, the sack of a British city by an Anglo-Saxon army. Here the Christian aspect of the doomed city appears especially to have been the dominant thought in the mind of Gildas, and Gildas, it should be remembered, was far from being an indiscriminate admirer of the religion and morality of his fellow-countrymen. He lashed what he looked upon as their backslidings with an unsparing pen; with a pen so merciless, indeed, that his words of bitter fault-finding have been even looked upon as not a little exaggerated. But in spite of this anger at the errors of the church of his countrymen, the Christian aspect of the city whose fall he describes, is very remarkable, and evidently points to the fact that in these British cities, before the Saxon conquest, the "Faith of Christ" had obtained a recognised position and a widespread influence. His description of a doomed city is as follows :—

"All the columns" (he speaks of the assaults of the enemy as though they were especially made on the church or temple of God) "were levelled with the ground by the frequent strokes of the battering-ram, all the husbandmen routed, together with the bishops, priests, and people, whilst the sword gleamed and the flames crackled round them on every side; lamentable to behold, in the midst of the street lay the tops of lofty towers, tumbled to the ground; stones of high walls, holy altars, fragments of human bodies covered with livid clots of coagulated blood, looking as if they had been squeezed together in a press, and with no chance of being buried, save in the ruins of the houses or in the ravening bellies of wild beasts and birds." The stern, curt language of the Saxon Chronicle, describing, for instance, the fall of Anderida in Sussex, as already cited on p. 19, shows this description was not exaggerated.

It was in the course of this terrible and protracted agony of the Britons, that the bardic poems—the folk-songs of the people who were so slowly, and only after a long and determined resistance, either exterminated or a poor remnant driven into the fastnesses of the west—were probably composed. The historical poems of the British bards were no doubt animated rather by a Pagan than a Christian spirit —the spirit of bitter hatred of a merciless foe. But in spite of the Pagan vengeful spirit which lives along the pages of these strange sad poems, Christian allusions crop up in them here and there; comparatively few in number it is true, but still amply sufficient to show that the bardic writers were well instructed in the faith of Christ, and wrote for people equally well instructed, otherwise many of the allusions would be simply meaningless. The bitter, protracted war of extermination, the relentless cruelties of the Anglo-Saxon invaders, the persuasion, ever growing stronger and stronger, that the country they loved so passionately was lost to them for ever, had, so to speak, dried up in our British songmen well-nigh all the spirit of Christianity; but still Christian ideas and Christian words and terms lingered in their minds, and even a cursory examination of these ancient folk-songs brings to light such allusions as the following :—

"May he find a complete reception
With the Trinity in perfect Unity."
Gododin, Poems: Book of Aneurin.

"No one will be satisfied
With the power of the Trinity."
Gododin, Poems: Book of Taliesin.

"In the name of the God of Trinity."
Death Song of Erof: Book of Taliesin.

"May the Trinity grant me
Mercy in the Day of Judgment."
Book of Taliesin.

References to the invocation of the Trinity are to be met with frequently in these poems. Baptism is mentioned several times in such passages as—

"Ercwlf chief of baptism—
Ercwlf said . . ."
Death Song of Erof: Book of Taliesin.

"I saw great anxiety
Among the hosts of baptism."
Urien Reged: Red Book of Hergerst.

"With blades full of vigour in defence of baptism."
Gododin: Book of Aneurin

"I will enrich the praises of baptism,
At the baptism of the Ruler the worshippers wondered."
Book of Taliesin.

"Joyful, the bards of baptism.
Whilst thy life continues."
Urien Reged: Book of Taliesin.

There are several mentions of *Christ* and of *Jesus*:

"I will pray to the Lord, the Great Supreme,
That I be not wretched, Christ be my portion."
Arthur the Guledig: Book of Taliesin.

"Erof, the Cruel, caused
Treacheries to Jesus."
Book of Taliesin.

"There was a calling on the Creator,
Upon Christ for causes;
Until the eternal
Should relieve those whom he had made."
Gododin: Book of Aneurin.

"Who was Confessor
To the gracious Son of Mary."
Red Book of Hergerst.

There are also allusions to the "Great Son of Mary," and the "Gracious Son of Mary" in the Book of Taliesin.

"Let him who offends Christ sleep not;
Let not a man sleep, for the sake of the passion
Of the Son of God, but wake up at early dawn,
And he will obtain heaven and forgiveness."
Attributed to Elaeth, a Royal Bard of the 6th or 7th Century: Black Book of Carmarthen.

In the great *Gododin* poem (Book of Aneurin) we read:—

"He gave gold to the altar."

The *Gododin* contains the words—

"Firmly did he clasp in his hands a blue blade,
A shaft ponderous as a chief priest's crozier;"

and in the same group of poems we find also the statement—

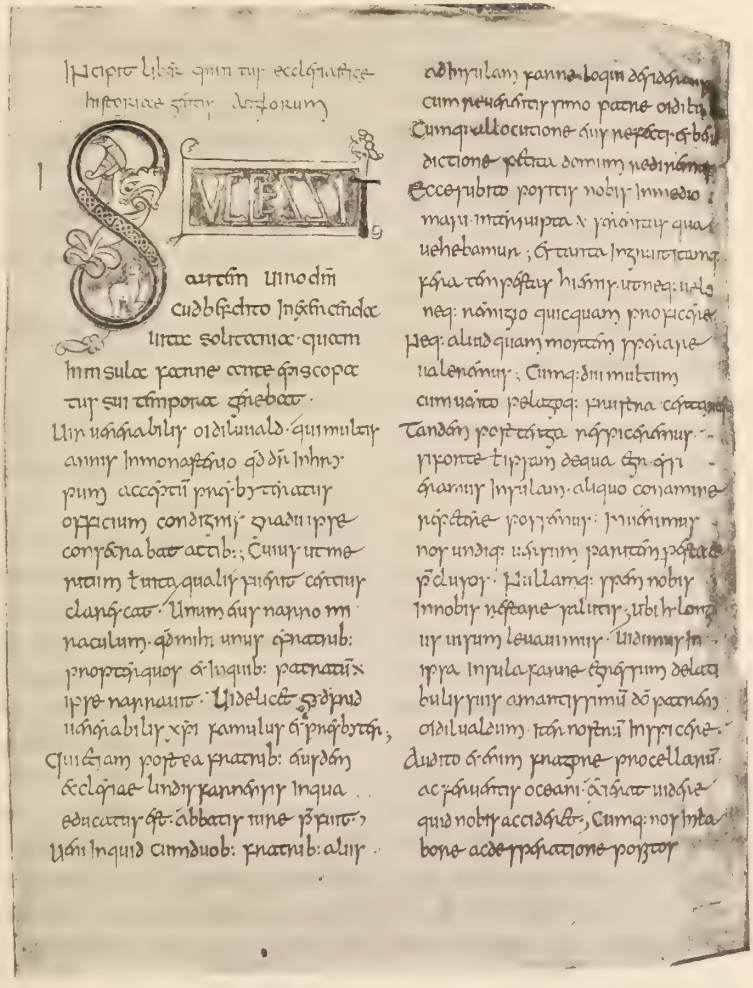
"Since he has received the Communion, he shall be interred."

These quotations are taken from historical songs—from war-songs for the most part attributed to the three great bards, Aneurin, Taliesin, and Llywarch-Hên, who were contemporary witnesses of the deadly contest between the Britons and the Anglo-Saxon invaders, and they by no means exhaust the Christian allusions imbedded in the ancient relics of British poetry. They are especially interesting and important to us—are these folk-songs—in our inquiry into the existence and influence of Christianity during the sad days of the conquest of North-men.

The words, however, of Gildas, written during the same period of deep gloom and suffering, are yet more important, and throw a strong light upon the question of the position which the religion of

Christ held among the British peoples before the coming of the North-folk conquerors.

were debased by worldly, and even vicious habits; they were neglectful of their holy functions, and were guilty of graver sins.



AN EARLY HISTORICAL RECORD: PAGE FROM MS. COPY OF BEDE'S "ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY," 8TH CENTURY (*British Museum*).

Gildas, the contemporary prose historian of this sad age, in his *Epistola*, draws a singularly dark picture of the state of Britain at the period of the conquest. According to Gildas, the princes were tyrannical, avaricious, sensual. The clergy

Simony was practised among the priests, and even with the bishops was this sin not unknown. The best among them were cowardly, or at least careless, in the matter of rebuking sin. He cites Eli as an instance of this neglect to rebuke open sin.

He begins his scathing diatribe against the church of his people with the bitter words: "Britain has priests, but they are foolish." Still, even this vehement accuser of his hapless nation owns that Britain yet contained a few good pastors. It is generally considered by most serious scholars that Gildas' accusations are exaggerated, but they certainly prove the existence of a considerable and influential church at the time of the invasion of the North-men. The testimony of the above-quoted folk-songs of the national bardic writers—Aneurin, Taliesin, and Llywarch-Hên—to some extent supports the witness of Gildas the prose writer, in the matter of the falling away of the British nation from the practice of Christian living in the years of the conquest. For these sombre and touching poems, which treated of the national disasters in that sad age of ruin and calamity, while bearing ample testimony to the reckless bravery and splendid devotion of the heroic warriors of the Britons, contain too many a reference to a spirit of vengeance and of cruelty, alas! everywhere present; contain, too, many a bitter reproach, many a solemn warning, connected with the vices which these truth-telling patriot song-men felt had much to do with the fatal national disasters. They dwell again and again upon that vice which had grown into a national sin—the love of revelling and of drunkenness.

Thus in the *Gododin* poem of the bard Aneurin we read:

"The Warriors went to Cattraeth, they were famous;
Wine and mead from gold had been their liquor.
Of three heroes, and three score and three hundred
Wearing the golden torques,
There escaped only three from the sword."
Canto XXI.

"Men went to Cattraeth . . .
Pale mead had been their feast, and was their poison." *Canto V.*

"By the light of the rushes they drank the sparkling mead;
Pleasant was its taste, long was its woe."
Canto XV.

"I drank wine and mead in Mordai,
And because I drank I fell by the side of the rampart;
The fate of allurement." *Canto XX.*

There are many similar allusions to this vice in the poem.

There seems no question but that the fierce relentless war which went on, year after year, sapping the life-blood of the British peoples, destroying all their earthly hopes and onlooks, weakened at the same time their religious fervour. Such a bitter "life-or-death" contest would, alas! too surely stir up all the slumbering, fierce passions of human nature, by exciting the bitterest feelings of hopeless anger, unsatisfied revenge, and intense hatred of their remorseless foes. This hatred was so indiscriminate and relentless that Bede, quoting from Gildas, tells us that the Britons, "among other most wicked actions not to be expressed, added this, that they never preached the faith to the Saxons or English who dwelt among them."

CHAPTER III.

CELTIC-BRITISH MONASTICISM AND ITS WORK.

Power of Christianity in Ancient Wales—Its Testimony to the early British Church—Ireland evangelised from Wales—and England again from Ireland—Immense Power and Activity of the Irish Church—St Patrick—His vast Influence and Success—Subsequent Decline in religious Fervour, and revival from Britain—St. Bridget—Sketch of the Irish Monasteries—Abbots and Bishops—Life and Work in the Irish Monasteries.

BUT although many—perhaps the majority—of the British peoples fell away, in this their day of sore trial and utter ruin from Christianity and from all that its holy teaching presses home to men, still it is certain that there was a goodly remnant among the fugitives who had taken shelter in the mountains and valleys of Wales, who were conspicuous as servants of God. Nay more, it is an acknowledged fact that among that poor remnant, in a country destitute of great cities, and of all the appliances of wealth, civilisation, and culture, religion flourished in an extraordinary degree. We see the strange sight of even great monasteries devoted to religious culture and learning in that poor colony of exiles; we find these great religious communities able to aid in no small degree, even to guide, the singular and marvellous springing up and development of religion and learning in that sad age, which we shall soon have to study in the neighbouring Ireland.

We read among the "York" traditions—in which are probably the germs of truth—that when the torrent of Angle invaders became so strong as to sweep the British out of York for ever, the last British bishop of the old imperial city, Tadiocus, when he saw the hostile armies pouring in, joined Theonas, bishop of London, and fled for his life to Wales. After this the names "Welsh" and "British" are identical.

In the story of Christianity in Wales, a few names, and certain interesting particulars respecting great monastic foundations and eminent men connected with them, still survive. The fact that these vast monastic communities sprang up and flourished in the latter half of the fifth and in the sixth century rests on undoubted testimony; and the knowledge which we certainly possess that they owed, if not their foundation, certainly their subsequent singular prosperity and influence to the fugitives from Christian Britain, is an evidence none can gainsay of the existence of a learned and influential church in Britain before the Anglo-Saxon conquest.

We find great monasteries, which were at the same time colleges for study and devotion, in this age—that is, in the period between A.D. 500 and 600—flourishing in that poor and barren Wales, a country with few cities, a scanty population, certainly without wealth or culture. Such a

marked activity on the part of these Christian fugitives in Wales and Ireland, as is shown in the foundation and rapid development of these great religious and educational communities—a remarkable development, indeed, when the circumstances of the founders are taken into consideration—seems to tell us that these poor fugitives were reproducing what to a great measure had existed in their own country before its subjugation.

We hear of monasteries such as Bangor Iscoed, in the south-east corner of Flintshire, a community said to contain positively more than 2,000 monks at the time of its sudden and total desolation in the eighth century. Another great house was that Bangor on the Menai Strait, of which Daniel was the first abbot and bishop, by a custom well known and common in these Celtic foundations. Another holy house of Bangor, founded by Kentigern, once bishop of Glasgow, whence he had probably been driven by the Angle invasion, existed at the junction of the Clwyd and Elwy. It was an immense monastery, inhabited, we are told, by 965 monks, 300 of whom, being illiterate, cultivated the fields; 300 fulfilled literary work in the interior of the house; and the 365 others celebrated divine service without intermission. This great foundation was called after St. Asaph, the successor of the first founder, St. Kentigern. Many years earlier than St. Asaph, Dubricius, who is placed by early tradition in the last years of the fifth and early part of the sixth century, and who traditionally was consecrated by Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, founded the famous house of Llandaff in South Wales, in which the renowned and loved David, afterwards bishop, the patron saint of Wales, was trained. This David is said to have lived to the age of 100 years, and was buried in the Monastery of Menevia (St. Davids), which he had built in the remotest extremity of South Wales, where "the cathedral that bears his name presents so unique and pathetic a combination of indefeasible majesty and irreversible decay." There David, surrounded by the reverence of all, in reality the chief of the remnant of the British people, died in 544.* A beautiful tradition, perhaps based on fact, says that, when dying, David had a vision in which he saw Christ, and breathed his last, crying, "Lord, take me up after Thee."

St. Cadoc's great monastery of Llancarvan, founded apparently soon after the year 522, must not be omitted in this bare enumeration of some of the vast religious establishments which owe their foundation to the Britons who escaped from the conquering Saxon or Angle. Llancarvan, too, became a famous religious and literary school; it was resorted to by many who were not training for the life of a "religious." It became for a lengthened period the favourite school for the sons of British chiefs.

We know that these important and vast religious and educational communities came into existence, and gradually developed in the period when the remnant of British Christians, flying before the Angle and Saxon, found a home in Wales; but we know very little in detail of these vast Welsh monasteries beyond the names of the founders and of the more distinguished

* Canon Bright places his death some fifty years later than the date adopted in the text.

of their inmates. The traditions are too vague, and contain too much of the marvellous for us to rely upon them, when seeking for material for a serious history of a British Church in Wales. More weighty is the undoubted, simple fact, that when Augustine paid his celebrated and unfortunate visit to the banks of the Severn, he found the population to the west of the river, *Christian;* that he was met in conference by several British bishops and by a company of learned monks, who represented the Christian church of the ancient people.

More weighty still is the fact of the undoubted influence which this British church in Wales exercised upon that great and world-renowned Christian community, which sprang up in the same period (fifth and sixth centuries) in the neighbouring Ireland.

CELTIC MONASTIC LIFE.

Montalembert, in his picturesque and devotional "Monks of the West," speaking of the influence of the British church in

Wales upon Ireland, relates with his accustomed charm, mixing up legend and history as is his custom, the curious story of the monk Modonnoc, a Briton of the house which St. David had founded on the wild west coast of the Atlantic, known as Menevia, later as St. Davids. Towards the end of his days Modonnoc embarked for Ireland, and all the bees of Menevia followed him. Three times, says the story, he turned back, endeavouring to free himself from his strange companions, but in vain ; the bees loved the old man too well, and persisted in accompanying the monk across the sea, and thus the culture of bees was introduced into Ireland, where it speedily became a source of wealth to the country.

Such stories as these probably have some foundation of truth. There are others of similar import ; but we rest our assertion respecting knowledge of this far-reaching and undoubted influence which the British Christians in Wales exercised in Ireland, upon the fact, allowed by all the leading Irish scholars, that Finnian, the founder of the school and monastery of Clonard, in 520, the most famous of the great Irish monks of the sixth century—Finnian, who was known as the tutor or foster-father of Ireland's world-renowned saints, and others of the so-called "second order of saints," who were the real founders of the famous Irish monastic schools, received their training from Wales at the hands of St. David and other Welsh saints. Finnian was the associate or disciple of the three Britons, David, Cadoc, and Gildas, who occupy the first place among the teachers of the British Church in Wales. From these famous Welshmen (Britons) the Irish scholars also received their liturgies, about the middle of the sixth century. These facts, that many of the great Irish saints received their ecclesiastical education in Wales, and that Wales also furnished the Irish church with liturgies, rest upon no mere tradition, but upon genuine documents, well known and quoted by Irish scholars.

It was certainly from the ancient British church in Wales that Ireland received that fresh impulse, after the death of St. Patrick, which led to the development of the renowned monastic schools in Ireland. Nor is it too much to say that the preparation of Columba, the great Celtic missionary, for the work of his life—namely, the carrying to Iona and North Britain that Irish Christianity, which laid the foundations of English Christianity—was derived in a large measure from Britain, from that poor remnant of the Church which, having escaped from the deadly sword of the Anglo-Saxon, had found shelter in the monasteries of Wales.

No story of the Church of England can be truly told without dwelling for a little upon the beginnings of Christianity in the sister-isle of Ireland. The debt England owes to Ireland can never be exaggerated. There is no fair-minded Anglo-Saxon historian but would acknowledge now that the Christianity of England was owing rather to the Irish work of Columba in Iona and North Britain, than to the Roman work of Augustine in Canterbury. It is equally clear, too, that Ireland in the first instance received the faith from Britain through Patrick, the North Briton ; and again, that after the first

fervour excited by the early preaching of Patrick had died down, Ireland for a second time received from Britain a new religious impulse—nay more, that it received definite Christian teaching, formal Christian liturgies, from the ancient British church which had found a refuge from the storm of the North-men's conquest in the mountains of Wales.

It was after the second period of assistance from the British church of the refugees in Wales, that Ireland began the great evangelising work in our island, in what was then the land of the Angles and Saxons. Nor was the mission work of the Irish church confined to England; it laboured, too, on the continent of Europe, and its self-denying work there was crowned, as we shall see, with extraordinary success. Of the work and influence of the ancient British church in Ireland, during the wonderful development of Christianity there, we have ample contemporary evidence.

There were reasons why Anglo-Saxon Britain could never have received the "faith" directly from the Christian refugees in Wales. The antipathy between the survivors of the British and the North-folk (who, with such awful cruelty and pitiless severity, had driven the conquered from their lands and homes) was, alas! so bitter that no impulse to tell the story of the Cross and Redemption to their merciless supplanters seems ever to have fired the hearts of the Christian refugees in Wales. We may deplore, and possibly condemn, this want of human love and divine forgiveness; but perhaps we shall never be able fairly to picture to ourselves the relations which existed between the British and their northern conquerors. We can only dimly imagine now, the hatred, bitter and ineradicable, which in the fifth and sixth centuries existed between the Northern conquerors and the poor remnant of the vanquished and dispossessed inhabitants of Britain.

In the providence of God the intense hate which existed between the races—the conquered and the conqueror, the Celt and the Northman—was not allowed to interfere in the long run with the blessed work of evangelisation. Celtic Britain told the story of the Cross to Celtic Ireland; and Celtic Ireland soon repeated the same glad story to the children of the North-folk conquerors, and thus, as we shall see, the pagan Britain of the Anglo-Saxons in its turn became Christian.

The annals of Christendom contain many a strange recital, many a marvellous history of the spread of the faith of the Crucified, but nowhere is a more marvellous history told than the story of the reception and sudden growth of the faith in Ireland in the fifth and sixth centuries; indeed, were it not based upon the amplest and most assured testimonies, it would be read rather as a romance than as a serious history. A student who for the first time came upon the wonderful recital of the rapid rise and the strange greatness of the power and influence of the religion of Jesus during the fifth and sixth centuries in the hitherto unknown island of the western ocean, would naturally lay the record down, and at once ask whether he had not been reading the feverish dreams of an imaginative enthusiast.

But he would find on research that the general statements which had so amazed

THE CLONMACNOIS CROZIER.

(*Museum of the Royal Irish Academy.*)

him — referring to great Irish monasteries containing 2,000 or 3,000 inmates; to a vast network of religious influences; to many books claiming Irishmen as their writers; to beautiful works of art created for religious purposes; and, above all, to burning and successful missionary zeal in many lands — were abundantly corroborated in many ways, and from many unsuspected sources. They are borne out by monumental remains and names connected with them in all parts of Ireland and of Scotland, by notices in serious and trustworthy ancient writers in foreign lands, such as by the Venerable Bede in England, by men of the type of St. Bernard on the continent of Europe. He would find it corroborated, too, by the many remains of Irish literature, some of it, of course, mixed with incredible legendary details, but at the same time containing undoubted historic facts; and this, too, after the wholesale destruction (so far as it could be effected) by the Danes in the ninth and following centuries of many such records. He would find it borne witness to by the existence also of contemporary Latin writings. All this mass of evidence of different kinds, from many lands, in various languages, would assure the amazed student that the story of the Christian church of Ireland in the fifth and sixth centuries, the mother of the Church of England, was no mere romance, but serious history.

No Roman legionary ever set his foot on that great and beautiful island, whose blue mountains can be dimly seen from some of the northern headlands of Britain. Alone in the western world—save in the regions of the inhospitable north or in the wild regions which lie to the extreme east of modern Europe—was Ireland free from

[*Photo: W. G. Moore, Dublin.*

THE TARA BROOCH.

(*Museum of the Royal Irish Academy.*)

Roman influences, Roman garrisons, Roman development. Latin was an unknown tongue there before the fifth century,

and the gods of Greece and Rome had never been heard of in the Celtic island. The famous Roman general Agricola, who commanded in Britain in the last quarter of the first century, had planned an invasion of the neighbouring isle, but he was recalled, and his design was never carried out by any of his successors. Ireland remained free, and was ever classed by the Romans as a barbarous island.

MAP OF IRELAND IN THE SIXTH CENTURY
(*showing monastic centres*).

It was a country of clans, the members of which derived their name from an ancestor who was regarded in a certain sense as still the head. In Ireland the tribal life which the Celts had originally brought with them from the Asian plains, went on with little change or modification. The clans, though severally independent, acknowledged the authority of an over-king, who in early times resided at Tara, but his rule was nominal. "Usages," we are reminded, "which elsewhere marked a remote

antiquity, lingered on here into historic time."

A few, but only a very few legends are preserved which tell us anything of Christianity in Ireland before the fifth century. We hear of a Cormac-mac-Art in the third century directing that his grave should not be made among his pagan ancestors ; we read of Druids watching the progress of Christianity across the narrow channel, and prophesying the triumph of the new faith across the stormy sea. Kieran of Saigin, a native of southern Ireland, in the fourth century is termed the first-born of the Irish saints. It seems probable that in the third and fourth centuries isolated and accidental visits made by Christian merchants had raised up here and there, in the south and south-east of Ireland, some few Christian families. But it is not until the fifth century that we reach the solid ground of authentic history.

About A.D. 373, at Ailclyde, now Dumbarton, the great Irish evangelist, Patrick, was born. We have an immense amount of legendary lore bearing upon this remarkable and well-loved teacher ; and possessing as we do a few contemporary documents apparently free from fables and marvels, and as to the genuineness of which no serious doubt exists, Irish historians have been able to sift the more legendary accounts, and to present us with a probably accurate picture of the life and work of this gifted man, whose influence in his own time was so enormous, and to whom, indirectly, the Church of England owes its being. His father was a Roman magistrate in north Britain in the last days of the Roman rule. When Patrick was only sixteen years old, he was carried off by one of the numerous pirate bands who were then plaguing all the coasts of the wide Roman empire, and for some six years he remained in captivity, the slave of a petty king in the north of Ireland, to whom he had been sold by his captors. Patrick was a Christian, and as he watched his master's cattle—he tells the story himself—prayer gave him strength to endure the hardships of his sad lot. At length he escaped from his captors ; but in his recovered freedom, and again in the peaceful seclusion of his father's house at Dumbarton, he longed once more to return to the country of his captivity, was eager to carry the gospel to the people he had learned to love, whose language he had acquired, and with whose ways he was familiar. One night in his father's house he heard a voice speaking to him in a dream, and the voice said to him: "We entreat thee, holy youth, to come and walk still among us." He obeyed what he considered a supernatural summons, and the date of his return to Ireland as missionary is generally given as A.D. 397.

For some thirty-two years he laboured among the people he longed so intensely to win, with passionate earnestness and varying success. Round his long missionary life has gathered—as we have remarked—a cloud of legendary history, mingled with credible statements. In no land has the apostle who first brought the story of the Cross been regarded with the veneration which has been given to the great Irish saint ; and the interest, even in our time, shows no symptom of flagging. Lives of St. Patrick are still being written by scholars and devout men of various

communions, nor are his biographers and panegyrists by any means confined to his own grateful countrymen. But nowhere, perhaps, have the results of his marvellous work been more strikingly summed up than by the English scholar* who was taken too soon from our midst. "The Church they [St. Patrick and his companions] founded, grew up purely Irish in spirit as in form. The Celtic passion, like the Celtic anarchy, stamped itself on Irish religion. There was something strangely picturesque in its asceticism, in its terrible penances, its life-long fasts, its sudden contrasts of wrath and pity, the sweetness and tenderness of its legends and hymns, the awful vindictiveness of its curses. But in good as in ill, its type of moral conduct was utterly unlike that which Christianity elsewhere developed. It was wanting in moral earnestness, in the sense of human dignity, in self-command; it recognised spiritual excellence in a rigid abstinence from sensual excess, and the repetition of countless hymns and countless litanies. But, on the other hand, Ireland gave to Christianity a force, a passionateness, a restless energy such as it had never before known. It threw around it something of the grace, the witchery, the romance of the Irish temper. It coloured even its tenderness with the peculiar pathos of the Celt."

There is no doubt but that the preaching of St. Patrick had a wonderful, possibly an unprecedented success: when the accounts of his life-work are stripped of the marvellous and the incredible, there still remains a historic groundwork of true records of what he really accomplished during his thirty years of labours. He found an Ireland devoted to strange idolatrous customs and heathen rites, which effectually barred all progress in civilisation; he left an Ireland, if not largely converted to Christianity, at least kindly disposed to the religion of Jesus. It was not, of course, the Christian Ireland of legendary history, for at the period of his death many of the people remained unconverted. Not a few—it is evident—still continued to regard him and his preaching with hostility; for in his "Confession," a book which the severest critic is compelled to regard as genuine, he represents himself as in daily expectation of being put to death. But his influence with the petty kings and tribal chieftains seems to have been really very great; as a rule, it was to them he addressed himself in the first instance. The chieftain once secure, the clan as a matter of course were disposed to follow in his steps.

This is the probable explanation of such legends as tell of the great baptism at Tara of several thousands on one occasion. There seems, however, no reason to doubt that the simultaneous profession of Christianity by great multitudes happened more than once during the stirring and eventful life of the fervid apostle of the Irish. One of his latest and most thoughtful biographers tells us with great force that "the people may not have adopted the outward profession of Christianity (which was all, perhaps, that in the first instance they adopted) from any clear or intellectual appreciation of its superiority to their former religion"; but to obtain from the people even an *outward* profession

* Mr. J. R. Green.

of Christianity was an important step towards its ultimate success, for it secured toleration at least for Christian institutions. It enabled Patrick and the early missionaries to plant in every tribe, churches, schools, and religious communities, which dwelling round them, who, watching their self-denying, holy lives, then began to listen to their teaching, and thus, certainly within the century succeeding the death of the great missionary, Ireland became generally a Christian country.

[*Photo: W. G. Moore, Dublin.*

ST. PATRICK'S BELL.

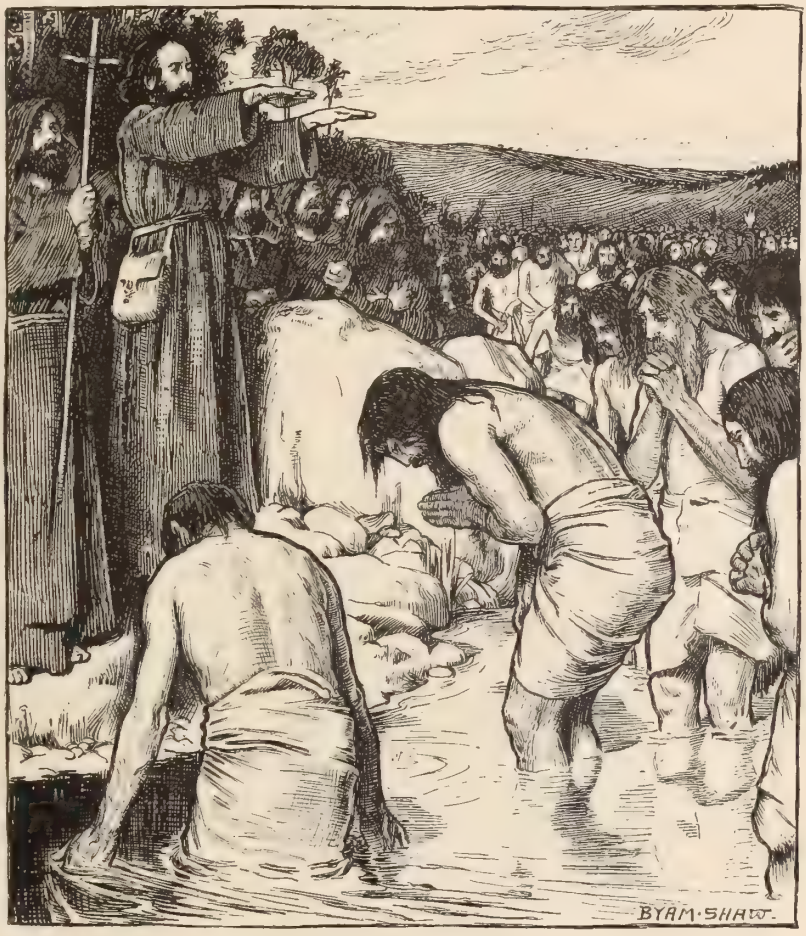
(*Museum of the Royal Irish Academy.*)

in a comparatively short space of time after he had passed away, grew into those vast monasteries and schools of which we shall presently speak, and which became the wonder and admiration of western Christendom. These colonies of holy men, perhaps at first only tolerated, soon won the hearts of the semi-barbarous people

There is no doubt that this fervid and devoted man was much more than the mere passionate preacher. He was the successful imitator of the wisdom as well as of the faith of St. Paul. Patrick, in good truth, became "all things to all men." Dwelling as he did in the midst of rude and barbaric tribes, so different

from the generality of the people of western Europe, he seems to have ever dealt very tenderly with their cherished usages and long-inherited prejudices; he adopted but rather in the outer framework and setting of those momentous articles.

The great work done by Patrick and his pupils was enduring; the Celtic



THE BAPTISM AT TARA.

their language, and Christianised rather than swept away their ancient customs. It was Christianity he introduced, but it remained ever an Irish, a national Christianity; it differed markedly from the Christianity of other nations—not in any of the great fundamental articles of belief, Christianity of which Patrick and his first missionaries were the wise and devoted master builders, possessed a strange power —such a power as the heathen world had never experienced since the days of the first preachers of the faith, and has rarely seen again. Within a hundred years of the

death of the Irish apostle, the barbarous and half-savage land, the scene of his self-denying labours, became the home of famous schools, to which not only the inhabitants of Britain — that remote island of the wild western seas—resorted, but it positively became the educational home of crowds of eager students of various ranks from all parts of cultured western Europe. "For a time it seemed as if the course of the world's history was to be changed; as if the older Celtic race, that Roman and German had driven before them, had turned to the moral conquest of their conquerors; for a time it seemed as if Celtic and not Latin Christianity was to mould the destinies of the churches of the west." This strange result, however, was not to come to pass, and the marvellous Celtic church, when in God's providence it had once quickened with new life that Christianity which seemed to be well-nigh everywhere languishing and even dying, suddenly came to an end, and gave place again to that older and more stately church, which at one time it appeared likely to sweep away and supplant.

Two of the contemporaries or immediate successors of Patrick claim a special mention.

Benignus, the early follower and life-long companion of Patrick, is spoken of as the "Singer of Psalms." He became bishop of Armagh, and is accounted the special apostle of Connaught; he only survived his loved master five years, dying in 468.

Around Bridget, whose memory among the Irish people is venerated with a devotion only second to that of Patrick, has gathered a vast mass of legendary lore, but when disentangled from incredible tradition, the story of this eminent saint is found to be based on authentic sources. She was a pupil of some of the hearers and disciples of Patrick, whose winding-sheet she is said to have made. This last tradition is, however, baseless, for she hardly could have known Patrick. Her career must be dated in the years 450-523. What is certain about Bridget is her pure and devoted life, her conspicuous ability, and determination to raise and elevate her sex. The women of Ireland of her day occupied a low and comparatively degraded position; but owing to Bridget's noble labours and saintly example, there is no doubt but that from her time her sisters began to attain in Ireland and in many other countries the place and influence which the divine Founder of our faith had claimed and won for them.

Bridget founded the double monastery (monks and nuns) of Kildare, a mighty religious foundation which subsequently had affiliated houses of monks and nuns all over Ireland. The double monastery of Kildare was the prototype of Hilda's house of Whitby, and of many other double monasteries of Celtic origin, which at a later time exercised so great an influence in Anglo-Saxon England, as well as on the continent of Europe. With some ingenuity and perhaps with a certain amount of truth, the French writer Ozanam attributes the chivalry of the French character to this association of the sexes in the great double monasteries of monks and nuns founded under Irish influence in France.

But to return to Ireland and the church of Patrick. Patrick died in 463. We possess a very ancient document, dating certainly from the eighth century, which somewhat fancifully divides into three periods the time between the rise of Patrick's influence and the year of our Lord 666, the date of the third visitation of the deadly Yellow Plague which was so fatal a scourge, in the British isles especially. The document in question, "A Catalogue of the Saints of Ireland according to their different periods," although a genuine writing of the eighth century, is more or less a fanciful description of what really happened to Ireland in those two eventful centuries. Roughly, it divides the Irish saints into three distinct classes or orders, which may be described as secular, monastic, and hermits.

The saints of *the first order*—the secular—which continued for about a century after Patrick's death, were all bishops—says our ancient writing—350 in number, founders of churches. They had one head, Christ, and one leader, Patrick; one mass, one celebration, one tonsure from ear to ear, one Easter on the fourteenth moon after the vernal equinox. They did not refuse the service and society of women; for they feared not temptation, because founded on Christ the Rock.

The second order—the monastic—consisted of few bishops and many presbyters. They had one head—our Lord; their Easter and tonsure were as in the first order, but they refused the service of women, separating them from their monasteries. These received their ritual and teaching from the ancient British church in Wales.

The third order of saints—the hermits—consisted of presbyters and a few bishops; they dwelt in deserts and lived on alms; their food consisted of herbs and water. They continued until the great mortality in 666.

The picture painted in this venerable document is of course fanciful, but it gives a fair, though rough representation of Irish religion, during the first two hundred years of Christianity in the "Island of Saints." Taken in conjunction with other records and remains, we gather from it that there was a decline in religious fervour some time after the death of Patrick; that a new spirit was infused into Irish Christianity by missionaries from the ancient British church in Wales; that the religious communities founded by Patrick and the first preachers of the gospel, thus reinforced from Britain, received an enormous development, and became, as time went on, the vast monastic houses so celebrated in the history of western Christendom. It is with them and their life and work that we shall have especially to do, as it was from these great "houses" that Celtic Christianity received so marvellous an impulse; as it was from them that the religion of the Crucified was re-introduced into the pagan Britain of the Anglo-Saxons.

While much that is connected with the Irish church remains uncertain, and to a degree inexplicable, for want of detailed information, the fact of the existence and the enormous influence of its great religious communities upon the life, not only of Ireland and north Britain, but of western Europe generally, is indisputable, and rests upon the solid basis of authentic history.

The sixth century, within a hundred years of the death of Patrick, witnessed the foundation and extraordinarily rapid development of these monasteries and schools, the special and important feature of Irish Christianity. The number of such communities, their enormous size, their wide-spread influence—far beyond the comparatively narrow limits of Ireland—claim a somewhat detailed description, especially as the peculiarity of these singular world-famous establishments belongs not to fanciful tradition, but to the domain of serious history. It was to these great religious houses that northern and central Britain owed the re-introduction of Christianity.

The monastic system seems to have arisen about the third century, when numbers of Christians were driven from their city homes into the desert by the Decian and other persecutions, who still retained and elaborated their ascetic and associated mode of life when the actual pressure was removed. The primitive Irish monasteries with which we are here concerned were of the same type as those of Egypt and Syria, and utterly unlike those mediæval communities, the ruins of whose vast houses, with the dependent

Photo: T. Hoban, Athlone.

DOORWAY, CLONMACNOIS.

buildings, are still to be seen in Ireland, in England, and on the continent of Europe. In Ireland we must picture to ourselves—when we think of the monasteries of Clonmacnois and Clonard, of Moville and Bangor (in Ulster) in the sixth century—a number of scattered huts or cells grouped round a church or oratory of humble character, surrounded by a rough stone wall or by an earthen rampart with a ditch, and on the top of the rampart a palisade, partly to seclude the inmates and partly for protection against enemies. The cells were mere rough wooden or wattled huts, sometimes, though more rarely, of stone, and generally of beehive form. The

THE CRUCIFIXION, FROM A CELTIC BRONZE, PROBABLY FROM CLONMACNOIS.

(*Museum of the Royal Irish Academy.*)

little church or oratory in the centre was invariably oblong, without a chancel ; the doorways of the huts were often so low that a man would have to creep through, and the interior of these primitive simple dwellings contained only the roughest furniture. Although stone was sometimes used, the greater number of these early monastic foundations—the churches, the monks' cells, and the other buildings—which must have been often of very considerable size, such as kitchens, refectories, writing-rooms, etc., as a rule were constructed simply of wood, wattles, and clay, and so have perished ages ago. Not a trace, for instance, remains of St. Columba's famous monastery at Iona, which was built before the close of the same sixth century.

Besides the church, there were a few public buildings in these great Irish communities, such as a kitchen and a refectory, with a guest-house for strangers ; there were also storehouses, mills, and workshops, and almost certainly some large rooms solely for writing or study. The art of illuminating, extensively cultivated in these "Cities of the Saints," as they were termed, no doubt grew by degrees ; but manuscripts were copied, and to a certain degree ornamented, in the earliest years of these foundations, and the scribes must have had some scriptorium or writing-chamber, where they had abundance of light ; their own little beehive cells must have been too dark for any such work.

Each monastery, with its dependent houses, appears to have had a rule of its own, though these rules had a general resemblance in the most important points. The Abbot, or Co-arb as he was often termed in Ireland, was the supreme head of each monastic family, including the daughter houses. The abbot was sometimes a bishop, but usually a simple priest, with one or even more bishops as members of the community subject to him. These subject bishops occupied a peculiar position in the community ; they alone performed episcopal functions, and were treated with honour and respect as belonging to a higher order. We find abbesses such as St. Bridget with such episcopal chaplains ; these chaplains being always absolutely subject to the authority of the abbot or abbess of the "house." This strange Irish system was one of monastic territorial jurisdiction rather than one of diocesan episcopacy ; but episcopacy was always held to be essential to the very existence of the church.

The number of these subject bishops, to our modern view, seems to have been enormous ; indeed, the degree or order of the episcopacy was frequently conferred in recognition of the pre-eminence in sanctity or learning of some distinguished ecclesiastic, who nevertheless continued to live either as a hermit or as the head of a school in his monastery, without necessarily taking upon him the charge of any diocese or district, or even of a church. But the peculiar functions of his episcopal rank were never overlooked. The bishops were always applied to for the consecration of churches, for the ordaining to the ecclesiastical degrees, or holy orders ; they alone confirmed, and also gave the more solemn benedictions, and administered the Holy Communion with peculiar rites of greater pomp and ceremony.

An interesting example of the peculiar position held by the bishop in one of

these great Irish monasteries is afforded by the records of St. Bridget's double monastery of Kildare. Bishop Condlaed, who was appointed by this famous abbess to assist her in her work, on one occasion had gone to Brittany and had brought back with him certain foreign vestments which he used at special functions. But the abbess, always sympathising with distress, and perhaps, too, not caring for foreign innovations, cut these up and made clothes of them for the poor. On another occasion Bishop Condlaed expressed a desire to visit Rome. Now Rome was then the home of art, and Condlaed was not only her bishop but her chief artist. He was one of those workers in gold and silver and other metals, who have left beautiful specimens of ecclesiastical art for the admiration of the present age. On his applying to the abbess for permission for the journey, she refused to grant it. He disobeyed her commands, and on his way thither, the record tells us, he was devoured by wolves. This death of Bishop Condlaed was interpreted as a judgment for disobedience, because he tried to go to Rome in violation of an order of Bridget.

An abbot or abbess of a great monastery like Clonmacnois, Clonard, or Kildare, ranked among the powers of the land. Kings quailed before their spiritual threats. Occasionally they or their officers even led kinsfolk and tribesmen to the field.

The number of monks and students in some of these Irish monasteries appears to have been enormous. In certain cases 3,000 does not seem to have been an exaggerated estimate. The monastic school of St. Finnian at Clonard is reputed to have had that number within its enclosure at one time. Bede, writing of another famous Celtic monastery — the British (Welsh) Bangor—gives the number of inmates as 2,100. These great numbers were probably not reached till the fame of the monastery as a teaching school had penetrated far into the continent of Europe; for we read, for instance, of many foreigners resorting to such a school as the monastery of Armagh, and grouping their huts in the monastic enclosure according to nationality.

The food of these great "families of saints" was extremely simple, and was prepared in large cauldrons, in the same manner as we read in the Old Testament that food used to be prepared for the sons of the Prophets. Many of their disciples were employed in agricultural pursuits; they sowed and ground the corn used in their "house," they fished in the river, and had milk in abundance from their cows in the rich Irish pastures. The ordinary dress of a monk in these vast communities—the like of which the world had never seen before—was a coarse woollen wrapper or cowl, with a cord or strap round the loins, over a tunic or undergarment. The monk, as a rule, slept in his clothes on a straw mat in his cell, with, perhaps, a skin over him. The tonsure—peculiar to these Celtic houses—was made by shaving off all the hair in front of a line drawn across from ear to ear. The services in these monastic churches do not seem to have materially differed from the ordinary Western use which we are acquainted with in the mediæval monasteries of the Benedictine and other Orders, save in unimportant details.

The employments of the inmates of these Irish religious houses of course included all manner of field work; vast farming and grazing grounds, the gifts of kings and chieftains, were attached to these monasteries. But the principal work outside the solemn, constantly-recurring duty of prayer and praise, was literary work of various kinds. Indeed, the special *raison d'être* of an Irish monastery of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries was writing books, copying books, illuminating books; the study of Holy Scripture and theology; and above all, teaching and instructing the young of many lands.

In these wonderful seminaries of a distant and almost unknown island in the midst of the stormy Atlantic sea—whither, in these far-back ages, students numbering their thousands used to resort from the continent of Europe—Holy Scripture was, of course, a principal object of study. The Psalms were often learnt by heart. Latin, which before the days of St. Patrick in the fifth century was an unknown tongue, never heard save perhaps in the rare case of families of some merchant settlers in the extreme south of the island, became in these monastic cities a living language. Greek and even Hebrew were studied there.

Photo: T. Hoban, Athlone.

TOWER AND CROSS: CLONMACNOIS.

Writing formed, however, a large portion of the occupation of the monks and holy homes of prayer and study. In spite of the ravages of the Danes, and the

AN INITIAL FROM THE BOOK OF KELLS.
(*Trinity College, Dublin.*)

the scholars. We read of waxed tablets, styles, skins, inkhorns. The art of illumination was evidently extensively practised in these quiet, remote, but thronged, wholesale destruction of the Viking pirates in the ninth and tenth centuries, a few magnificent specimens of the patient care and unwearied industry of these monk

artists still survive. The Book of Kells and the Book of Durrow, beautiful and elaborate pieces of artistic workmanship, have been attributed to the famous Columba himself. The "Book of Kells" is a tolerably pure copy of the Vulgate, modified with additions. "It is impossible to give any idea of the splendour and elaboration of its ornamental pages and letters, or of the extreme minuteness of the work, which often requires a lens to trace it; yet these minute lines are as firm as if drawn by a machine, and as free as if they were the growth of Nature."* The more carefully and elaborately ornamented manuscripts were kept in satchels of embossed leather, into which they would just fit; these had long straps to hang them on the wall or round the neck.

To give anything like a mere catalogue of these vast Irish monasteries would be wearisome; three or four of the best-known, however, may just be named.

The monastic school of Clonard, founded by St. Finnian, became one of the most famous of these great sixth-century Irish seminaries. Finnian was trained by refugee monks and bishops of the ancient British church in Wales. In this house, as already mentioned, the monks and students numbered as many as 3,000 at one time. Instruction seems to have been usually given in the open air, the pupils being seated around on the grassy slopes, so that a vast congregation of scholars could hear the lecturer's words. The famous founder of this illustrious school died somewhere about A.D. 550.

But Clonfert, founded by Brendan the navigator, so called from his love of travel, had a yet greater fame than even Clonard, and was said to have been even more frequented by students. St. Brendan died at the advanced age of ninety-four, in the year 577.

The school of Moville, at the head of Strangford Lough in Down, acquired at one period the greatest reputation on the continent of Europe. The abbots of Moville for about 200 years appear to have been bishops. After a time, however, the foreign fame of Moville was eclipsed by the reputation of the Irish Bangor, an enormous and renowned community founded by St. Comgall in Ulster, in 559. St. Bernard writes of this house as being "the head of many monasteries, a holy place, fruitful of saints; one of whom, named Luan, alone is reported to have been the founder of 100 monasteries." Its pupils are said to have been scattered over Ireland and Scotland, and poured over the continent like a flood.

One more of these renowned monasteries and schools, which flourished in the Ireland of the sixth and two following centuries with a lustre never equalled before or after, must be mentioned. The house of St. Ciaran of Clonmacnois was founded in 544-548. The God's Acre of this monastery remained famous as a sacred burying-place for several centuries after its foundation. As a school it was celebrated far and wide. The scholar Alcuin, whom one great writer calls the "intellectual Prime Minister of Charlemagne," was a pupil of its head teacher, and, after he had attained the position of the foremost scholar in Europe, he addressed a letter to his old master at Clonmacnois, couched

* Adamnan, Life of Columba. Oxford edition, 1894.

in terms implying the utmost respect and deference. Alcuin sent an alms to his Irish house, and a quantity of olive oil, then a rare commodity in Ireland, to be distributed among the bishops for sacramental purposes.

This sketch of the Irish monastic church of the fifth and sixth centuries, organised by the ancient British church sheltered in Wales, will be fittingly closed with the following hymn, translated from the "Antiphonary of Bangor," the great religious house of Ulster, founded in 559 by St. Comgall; the monastery whence proceeded St. Columban and his companions, whose work and extraordinary success on the continent of Europe will be briefly told in the next chapter. The "Antiphonary," which contains this characteristic and striking hymn, is a splendid relic of the last quarter of the seventh century. It was written in Bangor in Ulster, and has been for 1,200 years absent from Ireland, where it was executed; it is now one of the treasures of the Ambrosian Library at Milan.

HYMN OF THE SEVENTH CENTURY

(*From the Antiphonary of Bangor in Ulster*).

"The holy valiant deeds of sacred fathers
Based on the matchless Church of Benchor;
The noble deeds of abbots, their number, times, and names
Of never ending lustre. Hear, brothers, great their deserts,
Whom the Lord hath gathered to the mansions of His heavenly kingdom.

"Christ loved Comgill; well, too did he the Lord;
He held Beogna dear; He graced the ruler Aedh;
He chose the holy Sillan, a famous teacher of the world.
Whom the Lord hath gathered to the mansions of His heavenly kingdom.

"He made Finten accepted, an heir generous renowned;
He rendered Maclaisre illustrious, the chief of all abbots;
With a sacred torch He enlightened Segene,
A great Physician of Scripture,
Whom the Lord hath gathered to the mansions of His heavenly kingdom.

"Bercenus was a distinguished man; Cumine also had grace;
Columba a congenial shepherd; Aidan without complaint;
Baithene a worthy ruler; Crotan a chief President,
Whom the Lord hath gathered to the mansions of His heavenly kingdom.

"To these so excellent succeeded Caman, a man to be beloved by all,
Singing praises to Christ he now sits on high. That Cronan
The fifteenth may lay hold on life, the Lord preserve him,
Whom the Lord will gather to the mansions of His heavenly kingdom.

"The truest merits of these holy abbots
Meet for Comgill most exalted we invoke,
That we may blot out all our offences
Through Jesus Christ, who reigns for ages everlasting."

CHAPTER IV.

THE WORK OF THE EARLY IRISH (CELTIC) CHURCH.

Marked Spiritual Power of the Celtic Church—St. Columban, and his Network of Monasteries on the Continent of Europe—Luxeuil—Austerity of the Columban Rule—Reasons why replaced by the Benedictine—Double Monasteries—Their subsequent Decline—Pagan England—Columba—His Rank and Influence in Ireland—Bitter Quarrel with the King, and sanguinary Battle thence resulting—Columba's Remorse—Apparent Change in his Character—Adamnan's Biography—Columba's Mission to Britain—Iona—Wonderful Success of the Mission—Columba's Personality—His Versatility—Holiness of his Character—His Death—Creed of the Church in Columba's time.

THE story of the church in Ireland in the sixth century, the result of the preaching and influence of the ancient British Church, reads like a romance. Its wonderfully rapid progress among the native population ; its vast monastic institutions ; the widespread work and influence of these communities ; all this, as we have said, reads more like the recital of a dream than a chapter of sober history. But the account of the work of some of the Irish monks, trained in the monastic schools on which we have been dwelling, and the results of that work on the continent of Europe, is an even more marvellous story.

It must be told very briefly, for it leads us far away from Ireland or Britain ; but it cannot be ignored, for it tells us who and what were the men trained in the ancient monasteries of our Church. It throws a strong light upon the spiritual power which must have dwelt in the Celtic church of our fathers in Ireland and in Britain—that Celtic church, the mother of the Church of England ; and, also, it must never be forgotten that the impulse which stirred up the Irish people to do these mighty, far-reaching works, came from the old British Church. The first burning love for Christ lit by British missionaries, when dying out was ever kept alive by the constant visits of teachers from the west of Britain; the doctrines and subsequently completed organisation of Christian life in Ireland proceeded from the same source.

Christianity in this sixth century was, we are well aware, at its lowest ebb in many of the provinces of the dying Roman empire. The barbarous races who had settled in many provinces were still pagan, or, at least, very imperfectly instructed in Christianity ; the old provincial inhabitants, impoverished and depressed, made but little way in the work of evangelising their conquerors. But a new impulse was given to the religion of the Crucified in these half Christian, half pagan provinces in the heart of the old Roman empire of the West, by an Irish monk who had been educated in the monastery of Bangor in Ulster, under the learned and saintly Comgall.

What decided the young monk Columban to leave Bangor, his loved home of prayer and study on the shores of the Atlantic, no one knows. Some mysterious impulse seems to have urged him to seek

a new habitation and a larger sphere of work in distant lands; perhaps the idea of founding another "Bangor" among the half pagan conquerors of the western Empire, decided him and twelve friends to undertake their strange and seemingly wild mission. They went not as preachers of the province which is now known as Alsace, in a desolate spot near the site of the Roman town of Anegratis, then a heap of ruins. Many disciples joined the little Irish band of monks; the first settlement soon was unable to contain them, and a second monastery became necessary.

LUXEUIL (1896). *Photo: Pattegay, Luxeuil.*

gospel, but only as monks who would show by their own austere lives "how to climb the rugged path," as they understood it, which leads to the city of God. They slowly wandered south, telling as they went their simple story; and as they went, seem to have been met generally with kindness, and by some of the Frankish chiefs were even generously welcomed. Eventually the Irish monks of Bangor settled at the foot of the Vosges Mountains, in the

About eight miles from their first home, not far from the city now known as Besançon, among the ruins of the once fair Roman town of Luxovium (celebrated for its warm springs), a site was chosen for the new house. The forest around was strewn with the wrecks of marble statues and other remains of a great and wealthy health resort; amid these relics of the past arose the rough huts and little church of the Irish monastery of Luxeuil, soon to

be famous throughout the western world. A third monastery under Columban was soon founded in the same district, at a place called Fontaines.

The life lived by the stranger Irish monks in their three houses, their extreme austerities, the lofty ideal they presented, had, by the very sharpness of its contrast with the excesses and self-indulgence of that barbarous age,* a peculiar attraction for the Frankish and Burgundian warriors who had taken possession of the Vosges country. Disciples in great numbers, rich and poor, collected round the saintly Irish monk. He gradually became a power in the land, and dared publicly to rebuke the more conspicuous vices of the kings and princes; no threats affrighted him, and his fame grew with each succeeding year. He was surrounded by companions as earnest and capable as himself; among them were men like St. Gall and St. Deicola, whose names have gone down in history among those who have played a distinguished part in influencing the course of events.

Continued reinforcements from the great Irish monasteries, whose rapid rise we have already briefly sketched, enabled Columban to make fresh, and ever fresh, settlements. It is, indeed, a wondrous story. From those rough groups of huts and poor churches erected by the friendless, homeless, landless children of the ancient British Church in Ireland, sprang, in an incredibly short space of time, that mighty network of monastic establishments, owning the rule of Columban the monk, of the Irish Bangor, which extended from Luxeuil in the Vosges, southward to the Lake of Geneva and the Lake of Zurich; far to the north and north-west to the shores of what we have named the English Channel and the North Sea, where the chain of his communities stretched from the Seine to the Scheldt. Many of the most famous monasteries of central and northern Europe, which played so great a part in mediæval history for several eventful centuries, were founded by Columban and his companions. They were dotted over western Germany, Switzerland, France, and the Low Countries; not a few of those great religious houses where the lamp of religion and learning was kept brightly burning during several hundred stormy years of wars and confusion and trouble, were the afterfruits of the prayers and labours of Columban and his noble band of workers. The student of history, as he reads the many-coloured, saddening chronicles of the Middle Ages, and pauses with admiration and surprise as he comes upon the noble record of Remiremont and St. Vandrille, Fontenelle, Jumièges, and St. Riquier; of Sithiu and St. Omer; of Kempten, and Bobbio, and, greatest of all, St. Gallen, remembers with astonishment that all these mighty foundations to which Christianity and culture owe so deep a debt, were the undoubted work of St. Columban and his Irish disciples, to whom the foundation of these numerous and influential communities is owing. That ancient British Church, whose poor fugitives in Wales had accomplished so

* This was probably the cause in great measure, as well as the partial justification, of monasticism. Even its false and exaggerated ideal, so long as it was really lived up to, was a protest against the impurity and licence around, which outweighed much evil. The subject will be discussed at more length when the suppression of the monasteries in the sixteenth century comes to be treated.

vast and so permanent a work in Ireland, and, through Ireland, not only in conquered pagan Britain, but on the broad continent of Western Europe — this ancient British Church before the Saxon conquest, of which we know so little, must verily have been a power greater, grander, nobler, than modern writers of history have usually chosen to paint it.

To return now for a short space to Columban the Irishman and the mother house of Luxeuil. In a comparatively short time after its foundation, Columban's monastery attained to the climax of its greatness and prosperity. Under the government of its second abbot, St. Eustace, between the years 610-625, it became the monastic capital of all the countries under Frankish rule. Through this seventh century it was the most celebrated school of Christendom, and the most frequented. The children of the noblest Frank and Burgundian families crowded to it; the most famous cities of the south provinces of Gaul—such as Lyons, Autun, Strasbourg — sent their youth thither. Every year saw the rise of some religious house, peopled and founded by the children of Luxeuil, and numberless sees sought as bishops men trained in this world-famous centre. Ecclesiastical writers proudly enumerated twenty-one of the alumni of Luxeuil, who received after death the honours of canonisation.

Under the presidency of Walbert, the third abbot, the house was made exempt from all episcopal authority, by an act of Pope John IV. (A.D. 641). In Walbert's abbacy the permanent garrison of the monastic citadel of Luxeuil amounted to 600 monks. Missionaries, solitary or in parties, were constantly issuing forth to found new monastic colonies at a distance, who were to live under the stern grave "rule" devised by Columban.

This "rule," extraordinarily ascetic in character, no doubt gave to the Christianity preached by the monks of Luxeuil a force, a passion, a restless, resistless energy such as had not been known before since the first ages of the faith. But its extreme severity made life too hard, too difficult for ordinary men and women. When the first fervour inspired by its founder and his immediate pupils died down with the lives of these eminent saints, the next generation sought a somewhat easier rule, and sheltered themselves under the great shadow of Benedict and the teachers of his famous Order, who preached also a strict, self-denying life, but one infinitely easier to aim at than the utter abnegation and suppression of self insisted on by the Irish Columban, and by Gall and Deicola, his life-long friends.

The rule of Luxeuil, devised by the Irish Columban, among other peculiarly harsh requirements for its monks, insisted upon an absolute and passive obedience to the presiding officers of the house. There was no reservation here as in the case of the Benedictines. Perfect silence was also imposed upon the brethren except for useful and necessary causes. In the matter of food, the rule prescribed the most austere diet conceivable with the preservation of health. Benedict granted meat to the weak and ailing, and even a small measure of wine (this injunction was afterwards too much relaxed among the Benedictines). Columban

allowed for the sickly as for the healthy, only pulse meal, moistened with water, and a small loaf. The monks of Luxeuil and its crowd of daughter houses, were to eat only in the evening; fasting was to be a daily exercise, like work, prayer, or reading. Fish, however, was not entirely prohibited.

These excessive severities at first discouraged no one. His army of disciples increased day by day, the sanctuaries they founded far away from Luxeuil became more and more numerous. His wondrous influence ceased only with his life. But the strong fascination which called out from the world this mighty army of "toilers for God," all following in good earnest the rugged and painful path they had marked out for themselves towards a heavenly city, was possessed only in a lesser degree by Columban's successors. The "rule" of Benedict, less severe, gradually superseded the "rule" of the great Irish monk in all the many monasteries of Columban; and when the Council of Autun sat in 670, only fifty-five years after the death of the mighty monk of Irish Bangor, throughout the countless houses which looked on Columban as their founder, no "rule" save that of Benedict seems to have been recognised. No doubt the exaggerated austerity of Luxeuil was found too hard and too difficult to enforce, and this in large measure contributed to the substitution of the easier yoke and lighter burden of Benedict.

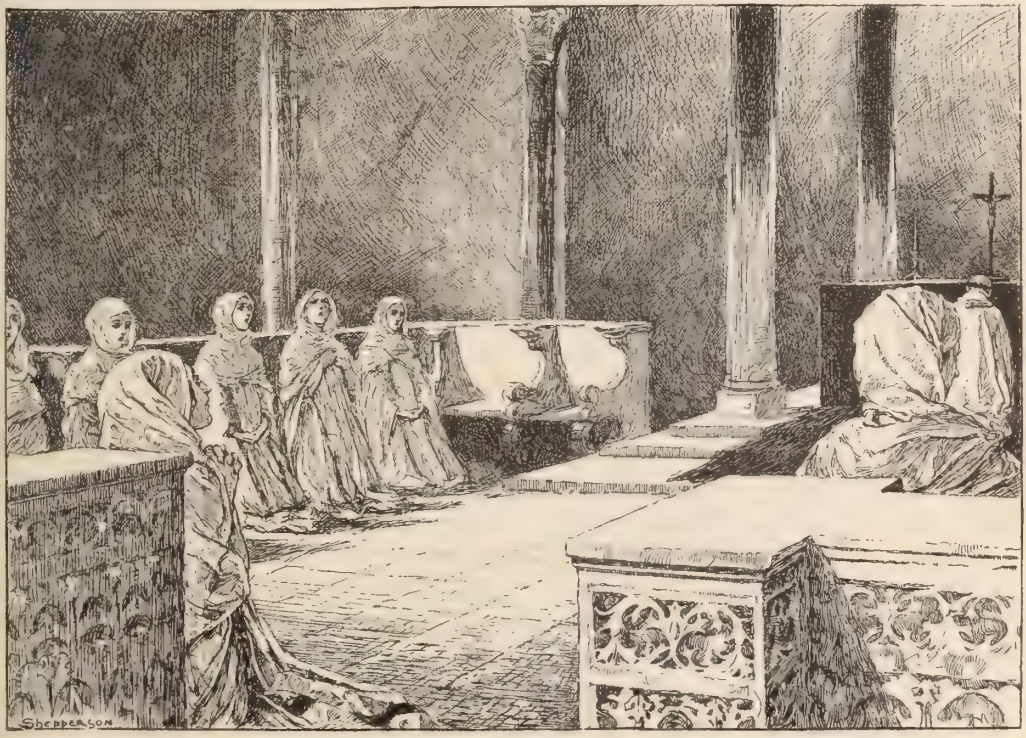
KILDARE CATHEDRAL.

But another and more potent factor must be sought for, which brought about a state of things that in less than a century, in his own "houses," eclipsed the rule and dimmed the name and fame of Columban, and changed that vast network of Columban Celtic monasteries into Benedictine Roman communities. It was the same mighty influence we shall find at work later in Britain, which for good or evil gave the sovereign "imprimatur" to the work of the Italian Benedict rather than to the labours of the Irish Columban; which chose the Roman rather than the Celtic spirit to guide and mould the newly-awakened Christianity. It was the sovereign will of imperious Rome that the Italian Benedict, not our own Irish Columban, the disciple of the ancient British Church and the inheritor

of its hallowed traditions, should be revered and honoured as the great apostle of the monastic Christianity of the future.

Before laying aside the charmed story of the mighty and far-reaching work of the Irish monks on the continent of Europe, a brief notice must be given of the introduction of one of the peculiarly Celtic customs—that of the double monastery—which St. Bridget seems first to have introduced on a large scale in her holy house of Kildare in the end of the fifth century.

A few leagues north of Luxeuil in the Southern Vosges, on the slopes of a mountain by the Moselle, in the seventh century rose the castle of Romaric, a noble of vast wealth, and occupying a high position at the court of Clotaire II., king of the Franks. The heart of Romaric was touched by the words and friendship of the well-known Luxeuil monk, Amatus. He gave his vast possessions to the poor ; and on the site of his castle on the hill by the Moselle he built a church, and then established round his church the greatest female monastery that had hitherto been known in Gaul, named after himself, "Romarici Mons," known so well in mediæval story as Remiremont; this was in 620. Enormous gifts were presented to the new foundation by successive Frankish



"LAUS PERENNIS" (*p.* 58).

kings and wealthy nobles; Remiremont soon became for women what Luxeuil already was for men. The number of nuns in this holy house was so great that the "*Laus perennis*" (the service of perpetual praise) was organised there, and kept up by means of seven choirs of nuns, who relieved each other in succession, so that not for one moment, day or night, was there an intermission in the solemn devotions believed in those days to be peculiarly acceptable as service to the Almighty.

There were two monasteries at Remiremont, one for monks and one for nuns, connected with each other, but with a special Superior for each of the communities. This was also the case at Jouarre, Faremoutiers, and at several other great foundations for women. The ranks of these nuns, whose life-long sacrifice is praised in the "Liturgy," where prayer is asked for the people and the clergy, and a special intercession is added for all consecrated women, "*ora pro populo, interveni pro clero, intercede pro devoto femineo sexu*," increased every day.

It was in these great foundations of Gaul, which sprang up under the immediate influence of the Irish Columban and his disciples, that the famous idea of a *double* monastery, for monk and nun, struck root on the Continent of Europe. This singular custom, of which in the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries we have many notable instances, was evidently a Celtic one. At Remiremont the abbot had the supreme government; but in other instances, apparently in the majority of instances of these double houses, the abbess —as in the case of St. Bridget at Kildare and St. Hilda at Whitby—was supreme.

The case of St. Hilda, as we shall presently see, was a very notable one. Montalembert pleads for this strange union of the sexes in the double monasteries, and recalls the comparatively late example afforded by the solitaries of Port Royal during their sojourn near the nuns of that celebrated valley. Michelet curiously defends it thus: "The vicinity of the monasteries, the abuses of which have been certainly exaggerated, created between the brethren and the sisters a happy emulation of study as well as of piety. The men tempered their seriousness by sharing in the moral graces of the women. They, on their side, took from the austere asceticism of the men a noble flight towards divine things. Both, according to the noble expression of Bossuet, helped each other *to climb the narrow path.*"

The custom appears to come, in the first instance, from that great home of monasticism, Ireland. St. Bridget (A.D. 450-523) founded in her native Ireland the first Irish female monastery, known as Kildare—"the cell of the oak." Her early biographer, St. Cogitosus, who wrote in 800-835 (some scholars give even an earlier date), tells us "how, when innumerable people of both sexes flocked to her from all the provinces of Ireland, she erected on the plain of Life or Liffey, on the sure foundation of faith, a monastery which is the head of nearly all the Irish churches, and the pinnacle towering above all monasteries of the Scots, whose jurisdiction (*parochia*) spread throughout the whole Hibernian land, reaching from sea to sea." This establishment of St. Bridget's at Kildare comprehended both sexes, who were divided from each other

in the cathedral of Kildare by a partition. This foundation of the great Irish female saint was no doubt the example followed by Columban, the Irish missionary, the great founder of Gallic monasticism.

Innumerable convents of women trace their origin to Bridget, abbess of Kildare. Wherever Irish monks have worked, says Montalembert, from Cologne to Seville, churches have been raised in her honour. In England the influence and power of these abbesses of double houses for a time was enormous ; but, as we shall have to relate, they were alien to the spirit of that Roman form of Christianity which, after a short, sharp struggle with the Celtic form of Christianity, prevailed ; and gradually these double houses, once so notable a feature in monasticism, and which exercised upon the Christianity of the sixth and following centuries so vast an influence, disappeared altogether.

When the events next to be related were taking place, the race of invaders who were to stamp their afterwards famous name on the people that sprang from the union of the various Northern conquerors of Britain, had well-nigh done their work. "The men whose special work it was to colonise Mid-Britain, as well as to win for their own the vast regions between the Firth of Forth and the Humber, were drawn from a tribe whose name was destined to absorb that of Saxon and Jute. These were the Angles or Engles or Englishmen."

They landed on the East coast of Britain about the year 480, and their conquering work was well-nigh completed before 563, in which year the devoted Irish missionary Columba set his foot for the first time on the barren, sea-washed island of Iona (Hy). In A.D. 563 the Englishman was really master of the great tract of Britain which lay between the Humber and the Firth of Forth, and which was soon known as the kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira, including all the land north of the Humber. From all this part of Britain Christianity had wholly disappeared ; among the settlers by the banks of the rivers we know as the Humber, the Tees, and the Tyne, by the year 563 the worship of Woden was as firmly established as it was by the Elbe and the Weser, or on the shores of North Germany, washed by the Baltic and the Northern seas.

The supremacy of Woden in the lands north of the Humber endured for some 130 years. After this dreary period of perpetual wars—first of conquest, then of ceaseless strife among the conquerors—the religion of Christ with extraordinary rapidity won its way among the Angle settlers in Northumbria. A new era began, and with Christianity a period of comparative tranquillity succeeded to the long and weary age we shall have shortly to describe. From Northumberland the faith spread to the Midland and Southern districts of the conquered island ; and before the middle of the seventh century well-nigh all the land possessed by Angle, Saxon, and Jute was again Christian.

The first great instrument of this strange conversion of a whole people was an Irishman named Columba. Once more our story takes us back to that island in the Atlantic so long unknown to history, so long reckoned by the Roman world as

barbaric, but which for weal and woe has exercised so mighty, so enduring an influence over the fortunes of the Anglo-Saxon race. Once more we must concentrate our thoughts upon that marvellous monastic life which had taken possession of Ireland, that strange monastic form of Christianity, as it has been well termed, "alike in temper and in form, but which in a hundred different ways leavened the entire Christianity of the West; which threw itself with a fiery zeal into battle with the mass of heathenism which was rolling in upon the Christian world"; which attacked heathenism with a zeal and with a success militant Christianity had never known before since the apostolic age.

Few have brought themselves to acknowledge the mighty debt which England and the Christian world owe to Ireland. Few have taken the pains to unravel the details of the story, perhaps the most marvellous page of Christian history. Men have forgotten the work of the Celt. As we shall see, it is a somewhat sad story; for it was the Celtic Christians who played the part of devoted and successful pioneers, while others entered into and reaped the fruit of their toils.

It was in the sacred enclosure of one of those monasteries in Ireland we have been describing, that a youth, who sprang from an important house whose chief exercised the over-lordship among many Irish chieftains, grew up in the first half of the sixth century, under the tutelage of Finnian of Moville, one of those rare souls to whose devotion and fervour the fame of these remarkable communities of prayer and teaching is so largely owing. His name Columba (or as his countrymen have loved to call him, Columb-kill: the dove of the cells) was borrowed from the Latin; it was a symbolical name, which signified the "dove of the Holy Ghost." Cell or Cells was probably added subsequently, and recalled to memory the number of religious communities founded by him. Besides in the school of Moville, he studied in the monastery of the other and yet greater Finnian at Clonard, who sent him to Etchen, bishop of Clonfad, for ordination. Etchen was at the plough, the probably true story tells us, when Columba came to him; and this curious little memory of the saint's early student life throws light upon the humble position which an Irish bishop of the sixth century might occupy. Further training the future apostle of Caledonia received from an old bard, Gemmain, who taught the young scholar to love the traditions and poetry of Ireland.

Columba himself seems to have been no mean bard, and several poems said to have been composed by him have come down to us. He wrote in Latin as well as in his native Irish. At a comparatively early age he acquired great influence among his countrymen. Many circumstances helped him to gather round his person a band of enthusiastic friends. His learning, and the bardic gift of song which he possessed, was a key that opened many hearts of his ever-impressionable countrymen; his wild and passionate devotion, too, contributed to win him that strange power which he evidently possessed over the souls of so many men and women. His high birth, closely allied as he was to

the royal house which exercised overlordship among the native Irish chieftains, gave him a peculiar position of authority among the crowd of young and devoted

petulance and impatience of contradiction which seem to have led him in the earlier portion of his life into the commission of high-handed, unchristian acts,

MONASTIC HUSBANDRY.

men who were growing up under the shadow of the strange monastic schools of that extraordinary age. It is not unlikely, however, that to the accident of his royal birth, and to the natural reverence and respect which his fellow-students paid him as one of their princes, was owing that

of which he bitterly repented in after years.

Before Columba had reached the age of twenty-five, the records of his early days relate how he presided over a crowd of monasteries. As many as thirty-seven of these religious houses in Ireland recognised

him as their founder; among these, Durrow, Derry, and Kells are specially famous. For Derry, a smaller foundation, and its holy house, the great missionary ever retained a deep affection. Some of his lines telling of this love are still preserved—

> "The reason why I love Derry is,
> For its quietness, for its purity;
> For 'tis full of angels white."

For some twenty years after reaching manhood, roughly between the years 540 and 563, Columba was evidently one of the leading spirits in Ireland of the great monastic development of Christianity, in which literary labours—including poetry, art, and the study of languages, as well as theology and its deep soul-stirring inquiries—played so distinguished a part. These literary labours of the great monastics of Ireland, a few years later made the fame of the remote island in the Atlantic, so long despised and looked upon as barbarian and hopelessly illiterate, ring through cultured Europe, and raised Ireland into the position of a great home of learning, the resort of students from all parts of the continent of northern and even central Europe.

Tradition even relates how two of the most ancient and beautiful of the Irish manuscripts remaining to us were the work of Columba's own hands: the Book of Durrow and the Book of Kells.* Modern experts somewhat hesitatingly ascribe these books to a rather later date than the first half of the sixth century, when Columba lived; but the ancient tradition, very possibly a true one, shows us how broad were Columba's sympathies in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen. He was not merely the fervid preacher, not merely one of the skilled, wise organisers of that strange monastic life which exercised so great an influence on Christianity at an age when the true faith seemed everywhere waning, but also the patient, unwearied student of the Divine Word, the tireless scribe, and even the trained artist.

The circumstances are variously related which led to Columba leaving his beloved country and beginning a new life as the ardent and devoted missionary apostle in the neighbouring country of North Britain, where Christianity was almost unknown, and where a struggling Irish colony had been planted among the nation of pagan Picts some forty years before. Some of his biographers are evidently loth to ascribe any motive to the "saint" save the loftiest, and are perhaps unwilling to take cognisance of what the noble Columba himself recognised—his guilt in the matter of the bloody war with the over-king Diarmait. But Columba himself very evidently looked upon his banishment and new hard life among the wild Picts of North Britain in the light of a life-long expiation for a deadly sin. Abbot Adamnan's words have been quoted as suggesting the only possible motive for his missionary enterprise: "He journeyed forth, simply longing to wander abroad for Christ's sake." But it is surely consistent with the theory of a life-long expiation to describe the state of mind which drove him into desolate and unfriendly lands to win souls to his Master's side, as an impulse urging him to dare and to suffer for Christ's sake.

Columba was about forty years old when the bitter quarrel arose between himself

* See previous chapter.

and the over-king of Ireland—the quarrel whose fatal consequences induced the grief and sorrow which drove him out of his beloved Ireland, which made him the apostle of the wild Picts, the founder of the holy house of Iona, that mother house of the Church of England. A young scion of the reigning house of Connaught, a kinsman of Columba, had the misfortune, accidentally, to kill a playfellow in the sports at the royal city of Tara. He fled for protection to Columba ; but the over-king seized the boy prince and put him to death. Columba was enraged at the public affront, as well as being sorely grieved at the death of his boy-friend and relation, and threatened the king with prompt vengeance.

But other causes of mutual irritation existed, and a curious story is preserved to account for this fatal enmity between the over-king and the famous monk. It is interesting, for it throws light on the passionate literary instincts of this remarkable far-back age in Ireland. Columba's love for books and rare MSS. and his taste and skill in illuminating and transcribing, have been alluded to already. When visiting his old master St. Finnian at the monastic schools of Moville, he found a precious copy of the Psalms. The more valuable and interesting of such books seem to have been preserved and guarded with jealous care. Unknown to St. Finnian, Columba made a copy of this Psalter ; whether its value consisted in the beauty of the illumination or the preciousness of the text, we have no knowledge. Finnian was angry, however, that Columba had dared to copy his precious volume without his permission, and claimed the copy as his own. The claim was referred for decision to the over-king, who gave it in favour of the Abbot of Moville. His judgment, awarding the daughter volume to the possessor of the original from which the copy was made, passed into a famous Irish proverb, "To every cow her calf."

These grievances, and others doubtless of which no record has been preserved, laid the foundation of an irreconcilable feud ; Columba fled from Tara for his life, and one of his remarkable poems in the ancient Irish tongue, telling the story of this flight, has been preserved. Some of the thoughts, even in the rough translation, are singular and beautiful. and are worthy of record. They show how strongly the monastic life and its symbols coloured all the thoughts and expressions of teachers like Columba, even when they were speaking of the highest mysteries of the faith.

"Alone am I on the mountain,
O royal sun ; prosper my path,
And then I shall have nothing to fear.
Were I guarded by six thousand,
In no fortress would I be safe.

* * * * *

But God's elect are safe,
Even in the front of battle,
He in whom we trust,
The King who has made us all,
Who will not leave me to-night without refuge.
I adore not the voice of birds
Nor chance, nor the love of a son or a wife ;
My Druid is Christ, the Son of God,
The Son of Mary, the Great Abbot,
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
My lands are with the King of Kings,
My order at Kells and at Moone."*

The hatred between the monk and the king ended in a disastrous war ; a bloody

* The references to Christ as a Druid, and as the Great Abbot, are singular. The "Moone" referred

battle is recorded to have taken place between the friends and clansmen of Columba and the vassals of the over-king at a place called Culdreimhne. The victory remained with the partisans of the monk, who, with awful earnestness, fasted and prayed for the success of his party; there was certainly much blood shed, and the king and his followers fled in confusion to Tara.

The vindictive conduct of Columba in this matter was severely criticised, and a synod subsequently convoked at Tara excommunicated him. The sentence was, however, soon revoked through the influence of the famous St. Brendan, surnamed the Navigator, one of his dearest friends, who is said to have pleaded for Columba with intense fervour. But it appears certain that from this moment a new spirit entered into the wayward, impetuous, and passionate monk; a bitter remorse troubled his soul; he could not forgive himself for the blood he had caused to be shed, in what he saw now was his own private quarrel. We hear of him wandering from solitude to solitude, from monastery to monastery, asking one or other of the great Christian teachers of Ireland what he should do to obtain God's pardon for his awful sin.

A saintly confessor, who is spoken of as his soul-friend, known in Irish story as St. Molaise, of Innishmurry on the Sligo coast, famed for his profound studies in Holy Scripture, indicated to him how he could find the peace he sought. He must become a perpetual exile from the land he loved so passionately, and where he had done so many illustrious deeds, and had so many friends and followers, and live a life in heathen lands, winning to the Christian faith as many heathen souls as there were Christians slain in the bloody battle of which he had been the instigator. Columba, we read, bowed with sad resignation to this stern sentence. "What you have commanded," he said, "shall be done."

Columba is the religious hero of the Celtic races. No name, not even that of St. Patrick, has received such veneration in subsequent ages, and deservedly so; for not only the wild and imperfectly civilised Picts, who owned that great country we know as Scotland, eventually became Christian through his missionary labours; but the subsequent evangelisation of conquered Britain—our England—was in a great measure the work of Columba's immediate disciples. Englishmen have good reason indeed to think on his name with reverence and love.

In the many-coloured story of the heroes of our Church, Columba must hold the foremost place. His early life has been sketched. It will ever be a difficult task to present a vivid picture of the first forty years of the life of this great toiler for God. The historian has to wade through a maze of curious and partly-legendary narratives; and the figure which emerges from the maze seems half saint, half sinner — a brilliant and wayward personality, evidently burning with zeal to do a great work for God, but constantly swayed and influenced by worldly con-

to is in the county of Kildare, where the abbatical Cross of Columba is preserved. The rendering of this most ancient poem is translated from Montalembert (*Monks of the West*), from the version of Dr. Reeves, with some slight modifications."

siderations, by national and tribal jealousies, by personal ambition and passion, all struggling for the mastery. To-day, for instance, he is the ascetic monk, the earnest and devoted scholar, gathering round him a vast company of his faithful kinsmen and enthusiastic countrymen in rough and lowly cells of a great Irish monastery ; to-morrow he is the haughty and passionate chieftain, chafing under the memory of some real or imaginary affront or wrong, and if not the actual leader in a war of vengeance, certainly the guiding spirit among fierce Irish clansmen, only too eager for the fray.

COLUMBA EMBARKING FOR SCOTLAND. (*See p.* 67.)

But all this came to an end soon after Columba's fortieth year. The two natures of this strange man ceased to come in conflict one with the other. There was evidently a mighty soul-struggle ; but the

victory remained with the nobler nature, and the second half of the life of the famous founder of the world-renowned Iona monastery was wholly given up to the high service of his adored master, Jesus. It seems as though of a sudden a bitter, stinging sorrow for the evil his passionate and jealous nature had wrought among thoughtless and excitable men, had determined him to fly the scene of his former power, and to seek a new home and a new work, where he might spend himself—far away from the old scenes of his temptation and his fall—wholly for God.

We have for the second and more eventful portion of his life an admirable witness in the beautiful biography of the monk Adamnan. No longer dependent upon partly-uncertain and half-legendary sources, our chief guide in forming an accurate estimate of a life which has exercised so measureless an influence on the fortunes of England, is the memoir of a calm, thoughtful, pious monk, who subsequently succeeded to the abbot's chair in the Iona monastery, and who must have talked with men who knew Columba.

Adamnan was not merely a holy monk, given up to ascetic practices, to meditation, and to prayer; he was all this, but, in addition, was a man of varied learning. We know that he could write Latin, and was, besides, a Hebrew and Greek scholar. Men of the type of Bede, Alcuin, and others, by no means likely to write very exaggerated praises of a Celtic scholar monk, bear high testimony to his learning and goodness. This Adamnan was born in 624, only twenty-seven years after the death of Columba. His work is based upon a still earlier narrative, written by another abbot of Iona—Cummian, and reproduced almost word for word by Adamnan. It is, unfortunately, without any chronological order; but, as Montalembert remarks, it is "*un des monuments les plus vivants, les plus attrayants, et les plus authentiques de l'histoire Chrétienne.*" Well-known Irish scholars, such as Dr. Reeves, form a like high opinion of this most important document. Dr. Reeves speaks of it as an inestimable literary relic of the Irish church, perhaps, with all its defects, the most valuable monument of that institution which has escaped the ravages of time. It is one of the most important pieces of hagiology in existence.

The Duke of Argyll's estimate of the almost "contemporary" record of the greatest figure in the early history of our church is interesting:—"We find in 'Adamnan's Life of Columba' not only the firm foot-hold of history, but the vivid portraiture of an individual man. Not one historical character of the time is in any similar degree known to us. On one spot, and one spot only, of British soil there shines in this dark time a light, more vivid even than the light of common history—the light of personal anecdote and of domestic narrative. When we land upon Iona, we feel that we are treading in the very footsteps of a man whom we have known in voice, in gesture, in habits, and in many peculiarities of character; and yet of a man who walked on the same ground before the Heptarchy, when Roman cities still stood in Britain, and when the ancient Christianised Celts of Britain were maintaining a doubtful contest with Teutonic heathenism." With

this curious and authentic document of Adamnan before us, we can draw a real and vivid picture of Columba's life and work after he left Ireland, in 563, for what we have termed his great mission of expiation.

Columba chose for the scene of his new life and work the neighbouring coasts of North Britain. Some forty years before an Irish colony, under stress of famine, had emigrated from Ireland, and had settled along the coast and in the islands of Scotland (we adopt the well-known comparatively modern term), north of the mouth of the Clyde, in the district which has since taken the name of Argyll. These settlers called the district which they made their new home, Dalriada, after the name of their old province in the north-east of Ireland. These Dalriadans belonged to the clan of Columba, and were thus kinsmen of the famous missionary monk. Lately they had experienced a grave reverse of fortune (A.D. 560), when Brude, the king of the Picts, had driven them into the peninsula of Kintyre and other parts most remote from the mainland, and, at the same time, had slain their king. Their Christianity, too, seemed dying out. It was among these, his kinsmen, weakened and impoverished in body and soul, that Columba determined to dwell, and to light anew the dying torch of the faith.

It was in the year 563 that, with some twelve companions, chosen out of the ranks of his dearest friends, Columba embarked for the shores of North Britain in one of those great boats of osier covered with hide, common among these Celtic peoples. It was only a short voyage, and the little band landed upon the desolate island of Oronsay; but, climbing a hill in the island, he caught sight of the Irish mountains beyond the narrow sea they had just crossed, and this fact determined him to seek another site for his new home. He would not live in a spot whence he could see the Ireland he loved so ardently, and which he thought and hoped he had left for ever. This passionate attachment to his fatherland he never lost; again and again, we find touching allusions to it in his new life. In some of those fragments of verse—still extant—attributed to him, we have ever and anon references to this love for his old home in sad lines, as—

> "O Arran, my sun, my heart is in the West with thee."
>
> "To live within the sound of thy bells is to live in joy."

It appears, too, often in simple, sad memories like these: "In Iona once he called one of his monks and said to him, 'Go and seat thyself by the sea on the western shore; there thou wilt see arrive from Ireland a travelling stork, long beaten by the winds and worn out with fatigue. Take up the poor bird with pity, feed her and watch her three days. When she is refreshed and strengthened she will no longer wish to prolong her exile among us; she will fly to sweet Ireland, her dear country, where she was born. I bid thee care for her thus because she comes from the land where I, too, was born.'" Adamnan goes on to say that the stork was sheltered and fed, and, on the third day after, the monks watched her fly back over the sea to her old home in Ireland.

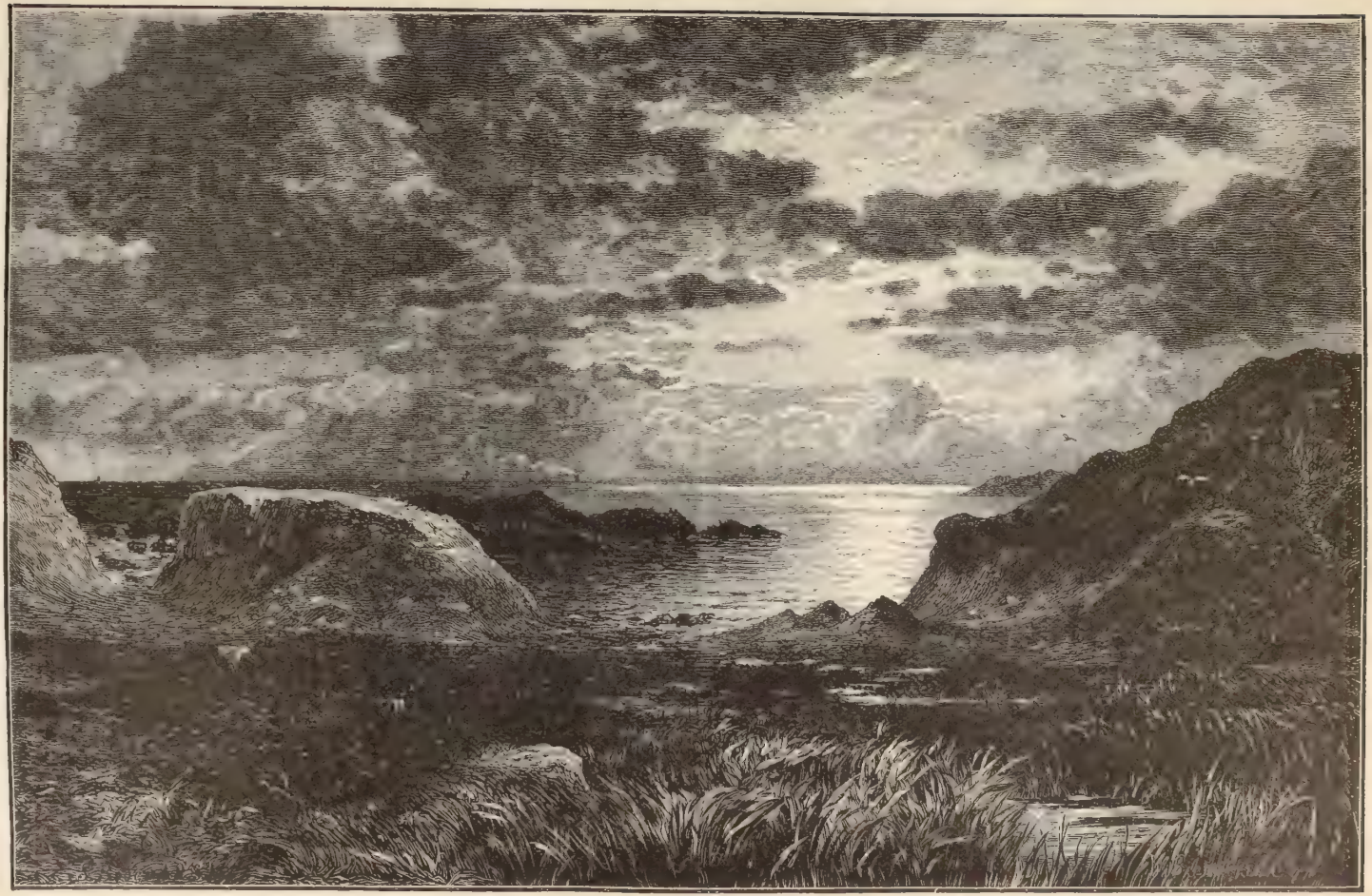
He chose, finally, the desolate island of Hii for the establishment of his new

monastery. Hii, or Hy, is a small and lonely island, three miles long by one mile and a half broad. Only the eastern part was fitted for cultivation, while the thin pasturage of the western coast was often covered with drifting sand. The surface is uneven, but the low hills never rise over 300 to 350 feet, and from none of them is the Irish coast visible. This seems to have been the chief point of attraction in the home-sick Columba's eyes. Iona is separated from the Ross of Mull by a strait about a mile across. This arm of sea no doubt helped the monk colony considerably; Adamnan speaks of it as abounding in fish.

It is curious to observe the effect which this west coast of Scotland has on different minds. We are familiar with the glowing descriptions of its brilliant colouring, its blue and misty mountains, its seas beautiful alike in storm and calm, though with a different and ever-changing loveliness, in the glowing pictures of that famous word-painter and novelist, who in his own peculiar winning way is never tired of dilating upon the exquisite landscapes and seascapes of what to him is verily a charmed land. Yet the eloquent and ever-fascinating historian of the western monks, the Frenchman Montalembert, can scarcely find words sombre enough to describe what was to him a country of gloom and mists. He paints, too, the same Hebridean archipelago, which he tells us "is picturesque without charm and grand without grace." He writes of the dull and sullen waters which washed Columba's Isle as entirely colourless and hopelessly forlorn, and as only lit up on rare days by the pale northern sun. The sandy beach, the little plain covered with scanty prickly grass, the low desolate hills, washed by the grey waters of a sullen sea, were all Montalembert could discern in the famous island of Columba's choice. The old barbarian name was in Irish writings Ia or I. The Latin writers and the Saxon chronicles usually call it Hii; Adamnan seems to have turned the old name into an adjective, Ioua insula, which gradually was corrupted into the more melodious sound of Iona, by which name the holy house founded by Columba is known through all the Christian world of the west. Some fancifully connect the Hebrew word signifying a dove (Columba) "Yona" with the more musical name of Iona; nor is it improbable that some very early monk-scholar suggested the curious and suggestive play on the old adjective used by Adamnan.

But beautiful or ugly as different eyes or varying tempers view the Isle of Columba, where he built his first rough group of monastic dwellings, Iona will ever rank among those few world-renowned sanctuaries whence men have issued, whose work has largely influenced the story of the nations. We in England recognise—somewhat grudgingly—our debt of gratitude, and perhaps with difficulty bring ourselves to acknowledge that to the work of Columba and his disciples, the monks of Iona, is primarily owing all that is good and great, strong and enduring, in our Anglo-Saxon peoples.

The bay where Columba landed is still called "the bay of the osier bark" (Port-na-Churaich). The site chosen for the little monastery was on the east of the island opposite the great island of Mull. From



PORT-NA-CHURAICH, WHERE COLUMBA LANDED.

Adamnan we learn that the first buildings erected for the band of strange monks were made of wood and wattles. No mention occurs of any stone buildings in Iona for many years, save perhaps the "kiln." A rude church "oratorium" was built, but even this sacred oratory was at first constructed of the same rough and perishable materials. Somewhat later an "oratorium" of oak brought from a distance was substituted. Some bee-hive cells and other stone buildings of a monastery founded by Columba in the little Isle of Saints, shortly after the first building of Iona, still however remain, but no vestige of the original Iona has been preserved. The present ruins of the mediæval monastery no doubt occupy the original site of the first rude huts and the other equally simple structures.

The small community of twelve quickly grew. The name of Columba, already famous, his remarkable austerities, and his singular power over men, brought over many from Ireland who wished to share in his life and work. The great missionary lived alone in a rough plank hut, sleeping on a hard floor with a stone for his pillow, and this way of living he never changed; ceaseless work of various kinds, only interrupted by prolonged prayer, filled his life. When he was not preaching or sharing in the outdoor labours of his monks, he was studying the meaning of holy Scripture or making fresh copies of the sacred text. Tradition affirms that he made with his own hands three hundred copies of the Gospels.

For the first two years after settling at Iona, he and his companion laboured with untiring zeal among his Dalriadan kinsmen in the immediate neighbourhood of Argyllshire, re-lighting the torch of the faith, which, as we have said, was burning very dimly among these Irish settlers. After the first two years began his more important work among the Picts. No Christian missionary before Columba had ever penetrated into the Highlands, and many strange stories are told of his preaching among this wild people. Near the modern Inverness dwelt the Pictish king Brude, who became, if not a professing Christian, at least Columba's friend and protector. Many converts were made among these heathen half-barbarian folk; the number of churches dedicated to St. Columba, in the neighbourhood of king Brude's royal residence, still bears witness to the remarkable influence of the missionary. It needed more than thirty years of unremitting toil, however, to accomplish these ends. The number of churches, each surrounded by its colony of monks, large or small, in many districts of Scotland is variously estimated. "Modern learning," says Montalembert, "has discovered and registered the existence of ninety of these monastic churches. Traces of fifty-three of them still remain in modern Scotland."

The narrow limits of the island and of the original holy house of Iona, very soon were too small for the ever multiplying crowd of disciples who flocked thither, drawn by the name and growing influence of Columba. Into the neighbouring isles, through the hills and valleys inhabited by the Picts, fresh and ever fresh little companies were constantly going forth, planting new religious communities on the same lines as the mother house of Iona, all under the supremacy of the great missionary monk, and bearing the name of "Familia

Columba-cillae." Some traditions even attribute 300 of such foundations to him and his disciples. This number is probably exaggerated, but that these communities were very numerous and scattered all over the country, is indisputable. Although it would be vain to assert that Scotland was Christian before Columba passed away, it is clear that the existence of so many houses of the "family of Columba," dotted over the land, each with their church, the monks busied, some in works of agriculture, others in preaching, teaching, or study, must have exercised an enormous power for good in the hitherto barbarous and pagan Scotland.

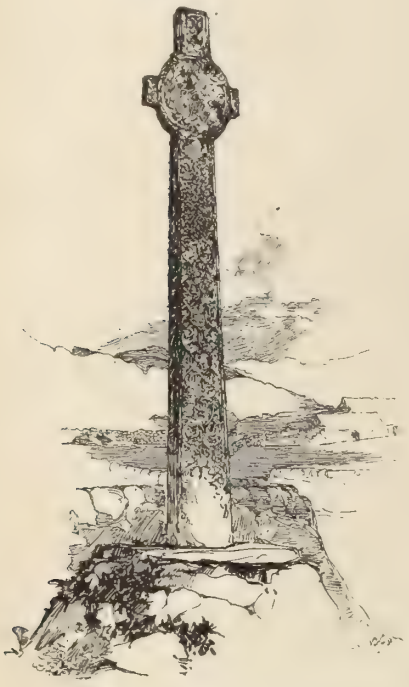
All these widespread and ever-growing influences, of course, tended to invest the mother house of Iona, the special home of the indefatigable head of this vast and scattered family of "religious," with a peculiar sanctity, which it continued to preserve long after the death of the holy founder. It had reached its highest point of fame about forty years after his death, when the English king of Northumbria summoned from the cells of the Iona monastery teachers and missionaries who should bring the message of the Cross into the broad lands won by the conquering Angle in Britain, north of the Humber. The mighty work of Aidan the monk, sent forth from Iona in the seventh century (635) into Engle-land—a story hereafter to be told—was the splendid fruit of the lifelong devotion and commanding genius of Columba. The Columban church first planted in Iona, afterwards embraced the whole region north of the Firths of Forth and of Clyde, besides giving to the Angles of Northumbria, through St. Aidan, Celtic Christianity and Celtic art. "The Lindisfarne gospels and many sculptured crosses, and other works of the Celtic school, remain as abiding monuments of the source whence we first of all derive the Christianity of the north of England."

And now of Columba himself. Who and what manner of man was the founder of all this far-reaching work? What was the special power which enabled him in so remarkable a fashion to attach so many devoted friends to his person, and to mould and shape them after his peculiar pattern, for few men appear to have possessed a like power over their fellows? What, too, were the special gifts which enabled him not only to quicken into new life and a purer faith thousands of imperfectly civilised and warlike spirits, brought up under the sinister influences of the wild paganism of the North? which enabled him not only thus to sway the hearts of these heathen Picts, and to dispose them to love and aim after nobler ideals than their fathers, but also to organise with consummate wisdom this strange powerful Celtic church; to give it not only the power to continue and to grow, but positively to become in its turn a missionary pioneer church in other and hostile pagan lands?

Other fervid and impassioned preachers, such as St. François Xavier, have won their thousands from heathendom to Christianity; but too often, when the magic of their presence was removed, and the music of their voices hushed, their heathen converts lost their first love, the fervour of their first faith cooled, and the net results of such work as François Xavier's were very meagre. But with Patrick and Columba,

the Celtic pioneers of true religion, it was different ; their work endured, and to one of these, Columba, we Englishmen owe in large measure, as we have said, all that makes life bright and useful, and even desirable.

Round Patrick and his eventful story



[*Photo: McIsaac & Riddle, Oban.*

MACLEAN'S CROSS, IONA.

cluster a mass of memories, some true, some purely legendary, but it is impossible out of these to construct any really definite picture of the man himself; every student, after a careful study of the latest and most scholarly lives of the great Irish saint, must be sensible of this. But in the case of Columba, it is different. Here, too, a mass of legendary lore gathers round the great and successful servant of God ; but besides the legends true and false, we possess a life of the Celtic hero and saint written by a scholar who displayed many of the true instincts of the faithful biographer, who lived close to his times, who dwelt for long years among scenes made sacred by the toils and struggles of Columba. In the little book of Abbot Adamnan "we possess materials for a real, life-like picture of the latter and most interesting period of Columba's eventful life."

His actual personal appearance—a comparatively rare memory in the case of these far-back heroes of history—is preserved to us with some details. All testimonies speak of his tall form, his manly beauty, the peculiar dignity of his bearing. The same ancient witnesses dwell, too, on his sweet and penetrating voice, so sonorous and winning that his disciples reckoned it as one of the chief gifts he had received from the Master he served so faithfully. Very remarkable was the passionate devotion to his person of his "family of monks," scattered far and wide over Ireland as well as Scotland ; for although a voluntary exile from his loved native country, he seems never to have given up the authority over the houses he and his disciples had originally founded there, certain of which, such as Durrow, were religious communities of great importance. This devotion was not merely paid to the illustrious head and founder of their order, not merely to the winning and eloquent preacher, the famous bard, the unwearied scholar, but to the sympathetic and devoted friend. No trouble or sorrow, no care or fear, but he sympathised with and tried to relieve or dispel it. Such stories as the following were told of him : One day at Iona, when a dull fog like a

pall enveloped earth and sea, the brethren noticed that of a sudden he burst into tears. On being asked the reason, he replied: "I see my dear monks of Durrow at this moment condemned by their abbot to exhaust themselves in building the great monastery after the varied labours connected with the tilling of their barren farm and the tending of their scanty flocks and herds, they would, as they passed near the master's hut, kneel, hoping to receive his blessing and perhaps a kind word or two.

Photo: Melsaac & Riddle, Oban.

IONA CATHEDRAL.

tower of the holy house; I see them toiling, wet, weary, exhausted!"

In his old age we are told how the loved abbot—now too feeble for those long and painful mission journeys in which in the days of his strength and vigour he delighted, often undertaken at the greatest possible risk to his life—used to sit alone in his little Iona hut, which served him as a study-cell, and to write and meditate there; and when the younger monks returned in the evening-tide to the

A beautiful legend arising out of this custom of the old man has been preserved. In the last year of his life he was too feeble to come out and bless his children, as his habit had been of late years; but the monks would pause in the same spot where they used to receive the coveted blessing of their well-loved abbot. One summer evening, Baithen, the steward of the "house," who succeeded Columba in the abbot's chair, asked the brothers if—as they lingered on the spot of blessing—

they were not sensible of something strange and unusual? "Yes," replied the oldest of the monks, "each day at this hour, as we pause at the spot we remember so well, floats by us a delicious odour, as though all the flowers of the world were collected here." Baithen, the dearest friend of Columba, ventured to explain the meaning of the odour. It was Columba, he told them, who, unable to move, sent his spirit out from his hut to meet and refresh them.

Adamnan specially notices, in that charming sixth-century picture of the life of a great benefactor of the human family which he has given us, the wonderful variety of his hero's powers and sympathies. Nothing connected with a happy, useful life did Columba deem outside his care and interest; and no doubt not a little of his vast influence among those wild Pictish tribes, where he laboured so many weary years, was owing to his helpful suggestions as to their fishing and farming, while his skill in agriculture was doubtless instrumental in making their upland fields and poor orchards more fruitful. He was, besides all this, not only the tender and devoted visitor and consoler of the sick, but in many cases he played successfully the physician's part.

Of course Adamnan's story has many threads woven into it coloured with the miraculous and supernatural, but these can be gently drawn out without any real injury to the beautiful and true story of a great self-sacrificing soul, who lived and worked some thirteen centuries ago. After all, it was the life led by this eminent servant of God which won that measureless power he seems to have possessed over men's hearts, the memory of which contributed not a little to the stability of his work and to the permanence of his many religious foundations. He owned, it is true, many striking gifts—the stately form, the musical voice, the winning eloquence, the tireless energy, the rare power of organisation and ruling. But these things, united though they were in Columba's case with a strangely sympathetic and loving nature (a somewhat rare combination) would never have sufficed to win for him that magic key of hearts which was his great source of power and influence, had not his life in a peculiar and especial way commended itself to the men of his age—and they were not a few, in that stirring age of upheaval and reconstruction—who, in good earnest, were "seekers after God."

We have already mentioned how, in his dreary cell, he slept on the hard floor—some say on a mat—with a stone for his pillow; and this austere arrangement he never changed, even when old age had lessened his powers of endurance. But his hours of sleep were but few, for he would often pass most of the night in prolonged prayer, which, we are told, excited not only the wonder and admiration, but even the alarm of his disciples. No mortal frame, they thought, could bear such restless work as Columba had undertaken unless refreshed by sleep.

"Let no one follow me," said the abbot one day in his later life to his disciples; but one, more anxious than the rest, followed his sainted master at a distance, and watched him standing erect on one of those sandy hillocks hard by the seas which wash Iona, gazing long at heaven,

motionless, with hands raised as though he prayed, and around him the watcher thought he saw a crowd of angels. The little hill since then has ever borne the name of "the Angels' Hill." Of course we may ascribe such visions to over-wrought fancy, but they give us some idea of the reverential love, mingled with awe, with which the founder of our English Christianity inspired his disciples. These devoted disciples told those who recorded the life of the great saint that, in the closing years, a strange celestial light seemed often to pervade his solitary cell, through the little apertures of which this light was seen shining in the long night hours with extraordinary brilliancy.

Almost incredible instances of self-inflicted torture are told, such as remaining plunged in cold water while he recited many psalms. A touching instance of his deep and practical sympathy with poverty is related. He was already bent with age, when he saw an old woman gathering herbs and even nettles. She told him how her poverty forbade her all other food. "See," he said to his disciples, "this poor woman, who finds her life still desirable enough to be prolonged upon such terms. And we monks, who profess to merit the eternal life of heaven by our severe lives, we live in comparative luxury!" Going back to his Iona cell, he gave orders that no other food should be provided for him save the same wild and bitter herbs which he had seen the beggar-woman gathering for her poor meal; and the recital goes on to say that he reproved his friend and minister, Diarmid, who had been with him long years, when Diarmid, out of pitying love for his master's weakness and old age, threw a little butter into the kettle in which this miserable food was being cooked.

The death of Columba, as told by Adamnan, is a noble and touching story of "the passing" of a true saint of God in the sixth century. He was very feeble, and something had told him the hour of his release was very close. It was a Saturday, and, leaning on Diarmid, the old man went out to bless the monastery granary. The monks' last harvest had been a plentiful one. Looking at two great heaps of grain, he said, "I see with joy my family, though I must leave them, will not suffer this year from famine." "Dear father," said his faithful attendant, "why do you thus sadden us by speaking of your death?" "Ah," answered the abbot, "I will tell you a secret; you must swear to me to tell no one my words till I am gone. To-day is what we call Saturday, the Holy Scriptures call it Sabbath or rest. It will, indeed, be my day of rest after my long life of work. Do not weep, Diarmid, it is my Lord Jesus Christ who bids me join Him. This has been revealed to me by the Lord Himself." But Diarmid wept bitterly. The two went back to the monastery; as they slowly walked, the dying saint grew weary and stopped to rest. A very ancient cross still marks the scene of the saint's resting-place on this occasion. As Columba sat and waited for a little return of strength, an old white horse, which used to carry milk every day from the dairy to the monastery, came and put his head upon his master's breast. The bystanders relate how the poor dumb animal looked sorrowfully into the dying master's face. Diarmid wished to drive

the creature away, but Columba would not let him. "See," he said, "the Creator has revealed to the brute who loves me what He has hidden from men. He knows of my departure." And then he blessed the animal who wished thus to take leave of his old master.

Lincoln is a well-known memory of that humble and holy man of God. St. Guthlac of Crowland possessed, we read, a like strong fascination for the wild birds of the Fen lands, and there are many other like instances.*

After the little scene with the old white

DEATH OF COLUMBA.

This strange attachment of brutes and wild creatures to great and devoted saints we come upon not infrequently in old memoirs of their works and days. They are evidently true records. These creatures, whom we often despise, and some at least of us treat with scant consideration, in their strange instinct, saw in these simple, holy men their friends. The touching attachment of the great wild swan (whom no one could tame) to St. Hugo of

horse, Columba still found strength to climb a low hill from whence he overlooked the Iona monastery. With great solemnity he blessed the sanctuary which he had founded and loved so well, and prophesied that the day would come when it

* The secret of it probably lay in kindness and *quietness*, for the same fact comes out remarkably in the lives of Fakir, Buddhist, and Brahman recluses in India. Almost universally the animals of the forest treat them with perfect friendship, as testified by many.

would be greatly honoured. He then went home, and, weak though he was, quietly set himself down to his accustomed work of transcribing the Scriptures—just then he was making a copy of the Psalter. He had reached the 33rd Psalm, and when he had written down the verse, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing," he stopped suddenly. "Baithen" (the steward of Iona monastery, and his successor as abbot), said the tired man of God, "must write what follows"; then, sitting on his hard couch, he gave a last charge to his dear children of Iona. The dying message urged that peace and charity should ever reign among them. With all his evident humility, Columba was persuaded that he possessed power with God as His faithful servant, for in his farewell charge he promised to intercede for them, as one who would be near God.

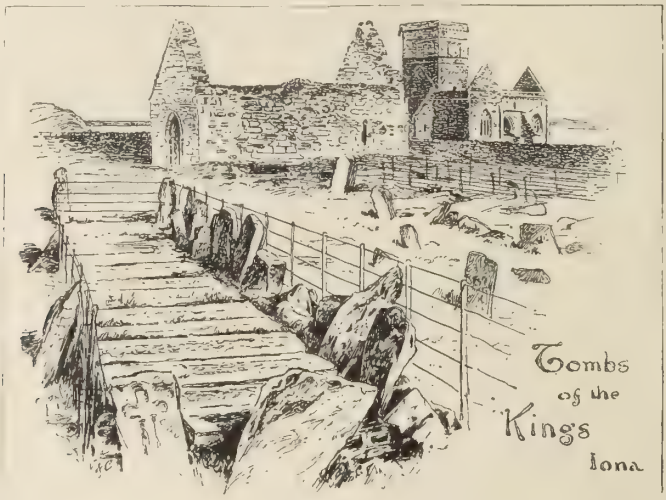
No one heard Columba speak again. The voice of the saint was hushed. *Sanctus conticuit.* That same night when the bell called to matins, the dying saint, when he heard the first notes ringing out, rose up and managed to reach the monastery church before any other of the brothers: the faithful Diarmid, though, followed him closely. The church was dark, or very dimly lighted; in these night services the monks brought lights with them.* Diarmid found Columba prostrate and speechless before the altar; he gently raised the dying abbot, so that his head rested on his lap. With the help of Diarmid, Columba made a motion with his hand as though blessing the brethren, who, with their lamps, had gathered quickly round their father. He recovered for a moment, opened his eyes, and then, as he looked round, there came over his countenance an expression of gladness and joy, as though, says his biographer, "he saw a vision of angels, and so died." The beautiful rejoicing expression remained on his face, say the eye-witnesses, even after death.

The "Rule of Columba," often quoted, does not seem to have been a formal rule, corresponding in any respect to the regulations left by St. Benedict, but rather a simple collection of maxims designed to guide a solitary who had devoted his life to prayer and meditation apart from his brethren. But, although he left no formal "rule," after his death, for a long period the numerous houses in Scotland and Ireland founded by him and his immediate disciples remained faithful to the rules and customs laid down and prescribed by him, which do not, however, seem to have differed from the rules and customs of the other great monastic communities in Ireland where Columba received his early training. But the devotion and earnest missionary spirit of their illustrious founder gave the "family of Columba" a peculiar force and power, which, as we shall see, eventually accomplished the entire conversion of the British lands where the Angle had conquered and settled, north of the river Humber. The monks of his many houses for some time bore the name of "The Order of the Fair Company" (*pulchræ societatis*), but were generally called "The family of Columbkill."

* This practice is well known to those who have attended the night services at the "Grande Chartreuse," where, in the dark church, the gleam of the little lamp carried by each of the fathers as they noiselessly move in one by one to their stalls has a weird effect.

In all the great articles of belief, Columba, in common with the other famous teachers of the great Celtic monastic church in Ireland, of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, followed closely the doctrines of the Catholic church in its best and purest age. As regards minor points, we find evidences of confession, public rather than private, optional rather than compulsory, and absolution was usually deferred until the penance had been performed. We find, certainly, traces of the invocation of saints and confidence in their protection. Belief in the real presence existed. Fasting and prayers for the departed were largely observed in the churches of "the family of Columba," and what has been related of his terrible austerities, and the claim by them "to merit the eternal life of heaven," in reference to the scene with the poor woman, show how much the pure doctrine of the Gospel had been depraved by superstitious asceticism even in that early age. Of the worship, however, which in later times was paid to the Blessed Virgin and the saints, there is no trace in this primitive Celtic Christianity to which England owes so much. We find no record of unction of the sick in any form whatever. No trace or allusion to the supremacy of the see of Rome exists.

The remains of Columba were interred in his monastery of Iona, which, for two hundred years, was looked upon as the great Scottish centre of the Celtic church. Seventy kings and princes were said to have been interred round the sacred grave of the founder. In 878, to preserve the hallowed relics from the Danish pirates, the shrine and relics of Columba were taken to Ireland. Tradition says they found a resting-place in the monastery of Down, where the relics of Patrick and Bridget had found a home. It is, however, impossible to ascertain what eventually became of the sacred remains; many places, including Durham, claimed to have a portion of them. The ruins now visible in Iona are those of a Benedictine abbey, founded on the original site of Columba's Holy House in 1203.



CHAPTER V.

THE ROMAN MISSION OF AUGUSTINE.

Gregory and the Angle Boys—Pope Gregory the Great sends Augustine and forty companions to Britain—Augustine lands at Ebbsfleet in the Isle of Thanet—King Ethelbert of Kent receives him kindly is baptised, and settles Augustine at Canterbury—The famous Letter of Gregory to Augustine—Gregory sends Mellitus, Justus, and Paulinus to join Augustine—Augustine meets the British Bishops in conference and fails to conciliate them—His return to Canterbury—Mellitus consecrated Bishop of London and Justus Bishop of Rochester—Laurence consecrated Bishop Coadjutor—Augustine's Death.

IN the very same year, A.D. 597, when Columba, the Celtic missionary apostle of North Britain died, a Roman monk named Augustine and forty companions, landed at a place called Ebbsfleet, in the Isle of Thanet, on the south-east coast of Britain. Augustine came with the hope of evangelising the pagan Jutes, who had taken possession of the south-eastern district of our island. Columba died in June. The memorable landing of the Roman monk had already taken place in the month of April.

The coming of these Roman missionaries to south-eastern Britain was on this wise. A man afterwards very famous in the world's story, named Gregory, in the year 575 had founded a monastery dedicated to St. Andrew, on his own estate upon the Cœlian Hill, in Rome, and there lived as monk and as abbot. This Gregory, who subsequently became one of the most famous of the long line of illustrious bishops of Rome, was already remarkable among his fellow-countrymen for his boundless charity and works of love. Men still show in Rome the long marble table where daily he was wont to feed twelve beggars. On one occasion, so runs the beautiful legend, a thirteenth unbidden guest appeared among them, an angel, whom, not knowing, he fed with the other needy ones.

A story, undoubtedly true, relates how once he severely punished himself when he heard of the death of a poor man who, in a time of famine at Rome, had perished through want. His thoughtful care and munificence on the occasion of one of the terrible pestilences, which in this age of war and confusion not infrequently swept over Europe, had won him boundless popularity. A memory has been preserved—a strange one, certainly, if true—of Gregory's hero-worship of the great emperor Trajan. "So impressed was the loving Roman abbot with the thought of the justice and goodness of this heathen sovereign, that he earnestly prayed in St. Peter's church that God would even now give Trajan grace to know the name of Christ and be converted."* In children this famous monk-statesman seems to have been specially interested, and for a time he trained the little singing boys of St. Andrew in those famous chants which bear his name. In memory of this choir-training, in which Gregory delighted, a children's festival was

* Dean Stanley, "Memorials of Canterbury."

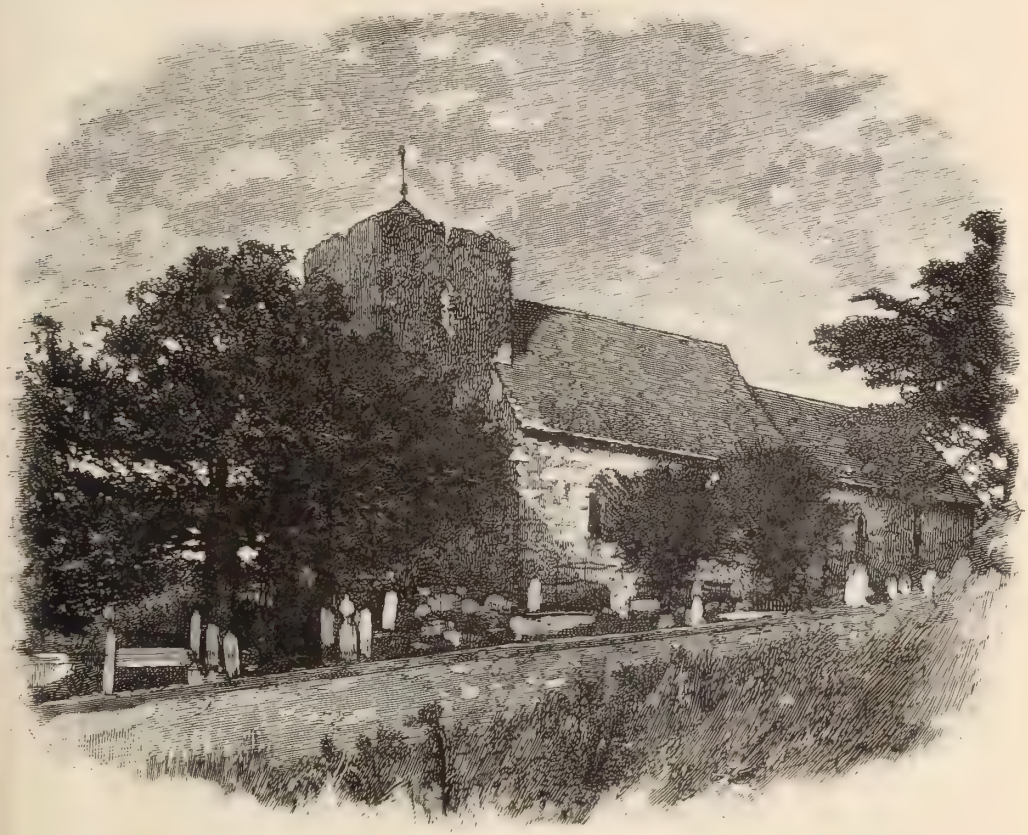
held on his day as late as the seventeenth century.

One day the abbot Gregory chanced to be passing through the crowded Roman market-place when several newly-arrived cargoes of slaves from foreign parts were being offered for sale. Among the varied

"NON ANGLI SED ANGELI."
(*From the painting by Keeley Halswelle, R.I.*)

groups of these unhappy ones his eyes fell upon a little knot of boys, distinguished by their long flaxen hair and fair complexion. Gregory stopped to look at them; his well-known fondness for children attracted him to the little group. Pity and sorrow for them, so young and helpless, torn away from their homes, led him to ask the slave-merchant, probably a Jew, whether the children were Christian or Pagan, and whence they came. It was the same intense feeling of compassion which had suggested those curious kindly speculations respecting the fate of the noble emperor Trajan, that led to his conversation with the slave-merchant, in the course of which occurred that curious string of puns, one following the other, now historical, which exhibits the mixture of playfulness, with a deep serious purpose underlying it, which often relieved in some sort Gregory's anxieties and his painful bodily sufferings. What, he asked, was the nationality of those bright, flaxen-haired, fair boys. On being told that they were Engles or Angles, "Well said," replied the monk, "they are rightly called Angles, for they have angels' faces. They should be fellow heirs with the angels in heaven." He went on, "From what province do they come?" He heard they were from Deira,

the Angle name for the modern Durham and Yorkshire. "Well said," again answered Gregory; "they must be rescued *De irâ Dei* (from God's anger)." Once again he asked, "Who is the king of Deira?" and obtained his permission to go as missionary at once to that far country, to win the inhabitants to the side of Christ. He started soon with a small band of chosen friends on what seemed a desperate



ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH, CANTERBURY.

He was told king Ælla. "Ah," he said, still punning upon the name, "the Alleluia must indeed be sung in those far distant regions."

The emotion which the sight of these captive Angle boys in the slave-market of Rome had waked in the great churchman's heart, was no mere passing feeling. He went at once to the Pope, venture; but he was so beloved at Rome that a furious mob, we read, attacked the Pope and demanded the instant return of their favourite. Gregory was hastily recalled before he reached the Alps, and more than twelve years passed before the longing desire of his generous heart could be fulfilled. The abbot of St. Andrews was elected Pope in A.D. 590, and after various

schemes had been devised for the conversion of the great pagan island, as Britain was then held to be, Gregory despatched from his monastery on the Cœlian forty chosen monks, under the leadership of prior Augustine, to the distant home of the flaxen-haired boys, who, as they stood in the slave-market of Rome, had years before excited his pity and a determination to convert their nation to Christianity.

It was no easy journey in those disturbed, restless times, and the hearts of Gregory's missionaries seem to have failed them long before they reached the shores of distant Britain. Augustine even returned from Gaul to Rome, begging in the name of his company to be released from the perilous mission. But Gregory was firm, and would not hear of any drawing back. "Better," wrote the Bishop of Rome in a letter given to Augustine to be read to the faint-hearted members of the mission, "not to begin that good work at all than to give it up after having commenced it. . . . . Forward, then, in God's name." At last they reached the goal of their long journey, and landed at Ebbsfleet in the Isle of Thanet in the month of April, 597—a memorable date in the making of Christian England!

The name Ebbe's Fleet or Ebbe's Port is generally derived from a chief in the following of Hengist, who is said to have landed at the same spot in 449. It is still the name of a farmhouse on a strip of high ground rising out of Minster Marsh. "On a near approach, you see at a glance that it must have once been a promontory or headland running out into the sea between the two inlets of the estuary of the Stour on the one side and Pegwell Bay on the other. What are now green hills, were then the waters of the sea. The tradition that some important landing had taken place there is still preserved at the farm, and the field which rises immediately on the north side is shown as the spot. Here it was that, according to the story preserved in the Saxon chronicles, Hengist and Horsa had sailed in with their three ships and a band of warriors, who conquered Vortigern; and here now Augustine came with his monks, his choristers, and the interpreters they had brought with them from France."* Interpreters were necessary, for the pagan Jutes, the masters of Kent, understood no Latin, and their speech—what we now might call Anglo-Saxon—Augustine and his monks were utterly ignorant of.

King Ethelbert of Kent, to whom Augustine at once despatched interpreters, was the great-grandson of Eric, son of Hengist, the first Jute conqueror of the south-east of Britain. The Jute king lived at Canterbury, a rough-built town erected by the victors on the ruins of an ancient Roman-British city destroyed by the first invaders.

Ethelbert was no ordinary man. He had obtained a kind of over-lordship among the other Saxon or Engle princes as far north as the Humber, and under the title of Bretwalda exercised a military supremacy over a large portion of Britain. His wife, queen Bertha, was a Christian. She was the daughter of Caribert, king of the Franks at Paris, the grandson of the famous Clovis. Bertha became the wife of the great Jutish over-king Ethelbert of

* Dean Stanley.

Kent, on the condition that she should be perfectly free to observe the practices of the religion of her fathers, and had brought from her Paris home as chaplain a Gaulish bishop, Luitbrand of Senlis, who remained by her side till his death, which occurred just before the arrival of Augustine. Queen Bertha was a devoted Christian, and no doubt the extraordinary and rapid success of Augustine's mission, which we have now to notice, was largely owing to the gentle but powerful influence of the queen. Indeed, it is more than probable that the old interest of Pope Gregory in the matter of the conversion of pagan Britain was stimulated by letters he had received from this queen Bertha, who evidently for a long time had been anxious that the pagan folk among whom she had made her home should adopt the religion she loved so well.

King Ethelbert received the messengers of Augustine with kindness, and agreed to meet them at Ebbsfleet. Indeed, the story Augustine had to tell the king was no novelty to him ; many a time he must have heard the beautiful story of Christianity and its Divine Founder from the lips of his queen. But with the old Norsemen's dread of charms and spells and magical influences, the king stipulated that the first interview between himself and the Italian strangers should be held in the open air.

The scene of the meeting between Ethelbert and Augustine must have been at once striking and picturesque. The Jutish king and his thanes, surrounded by their redoubtable Norsemen warriors, sitting on the bare ground under the shade of a great oak tree, waited for the approach of Augustine. The Italian missionary was a man of great stature. Chanting a solemn litany with his forty monks, a huge silver cross borne before him, together with a great picture of Christ painted and gilded, he approached the king, who bade him sit down, and the interview commenced. Augustine delivered his solemn message in his own Latin tongue, and the interpreter translated it into the Anglo-Saxon speech. The heathen king listened to it attentively, and replied : "Fair are your words and promises, but as all this is to me novel and uncertain, I cannot at once believe what you tell me, and give up everything that I and the whole of my race for so long a time have held sacred. But because you, strangers, have come from far, just to share with us what I see clearly you believe to be true and good, we will do you no harm ; on the contrary, we will treat you as our guests, and will see that all that is necessary for you is provided ; nor shall we in any way hinder you from preaching your faith and winning over as many as possible to your religion."

The generous reply of king Ethelbert to Augustine is given by Bede, who is generally well-informed and accurate. As Dean Stanley acutely observes : "This simple answer seems to contain all that is excellent in the English character —exactly what, under the influence of Christianity, has grown up into all our best institutions. There is the natural dislike to change, which Englishmen still retain ; there is the willingness at the same time to listen favourably to anything which comes recommended by the energy

and self-devotion of those who urge it; there is the spirit of moderation and toleration, and the desire to see fair play, which is one of our best gifts, and which I hope we shall never lose."

Very soon after the meeting, under the protection of Ethelbert, the band of Roman monks journeyed to Canterbury, the burg or city of the Jutish king. It

ETHELBERT'S AND ETHELFRITH'S KINGDOMS.

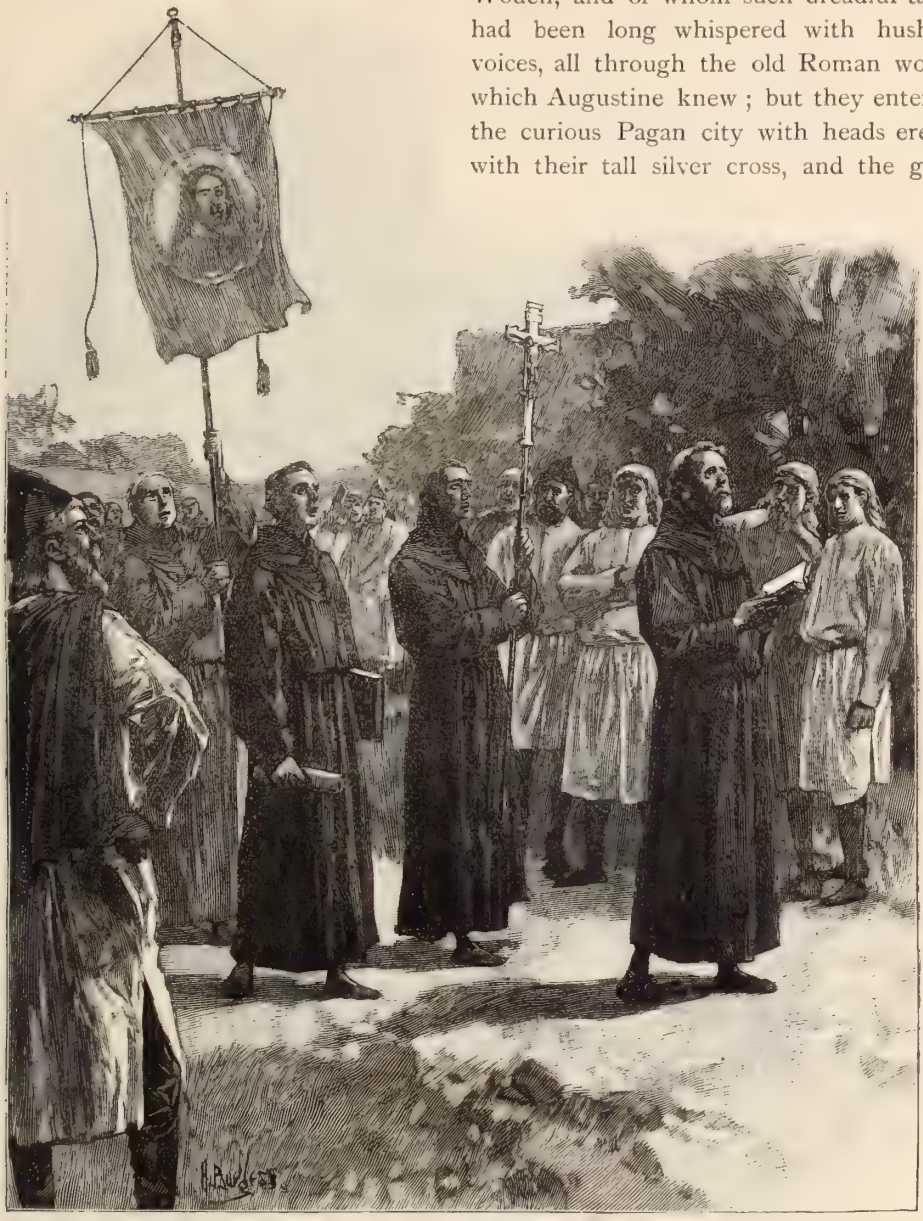
was a poor place in those days, only a group of wooden huts built round the royal hall of Ethelbert. The ancient Roman-British city of Durovernum had once occupied the site, and in the recital of the settlement of Augustine we come upon the mention of the ruins of three or four British churches, telling us of the days when Durovernum was a Christian city. But this was before Hengist ravaged the country in 449; for one hundred and fifty years the pagan Jute had been in the land. Queen Bertha had been allowed by her kindly pagan husband to restore one of these old ruined churches, and there, with her chaplain, the bishop Luitbrand, and a few Frankish attendants, had worshipped among the heathen surroundings of the Jutish court, hoping for better days. But the sight of a church in this strange land must have cheered the heart of Augustine and his monks, as they looked over the scene of their future labours.

We can picture to ourselves with fair accuracy what Augustine saw as, for the first time, he looked down from the slope of the hill where the little church of Bertha stood.* She had called it St. Martin's, after the famous saint of her native France—St. Martin of Tours; a cherished memory in the new country she had adopted. In the valley below, the monk would see a lofty hall, the palace of Ethelbert, the Jutish king. The hall was a rectangular, high, wooden building, its long sides facing north and south. Shining metal covered the roof and glittered in the sun. In the roof were openings, through which the smoke from the fires on the hearth within the great hall escaped. Round the royal hall lay the burg, or village, consisting of scattered wooden houses, which has since grown into Canterbury.

Here and there, amid the Jutish houses and gardens, were piles of shapeless ruins of the ancient Durovernum, and a weird and shattered Roman wall, still perfect in many places; so strong and massive was it, that fire and time had

* Recent investigations have revealed in the west wall of St. Martin's details of Roman work, making it nearly certain that this wall, at least, formed part of the original church worshipped in by queen Bertha.

failed to harm it. It was all new and somewhat fearsome to the Roman monks, this strange, rough city of the dreaded North-folk, who worshipped Thor and Woden, and of whom such dreadful tales had been long whispered with hushed voices, all through the old Roman world which Augustine knew; but they entered the curious Pagan city with heads erect, with their tall silver cross, and the gold and painted picture of the Christ borne before them, chanting the Litany their



"THEY ENTERED THE PAGAN CITY WITH HEADS ERECT . . . . CHANTING THE LITANY."

Father Gregory had used when the plague ravaged Rome: "We beseech Thee, O Lord, in all Thy mercy, that Thy wrath and Thine anger may be removed from this city, and from Thy Holy House. Alleluia!" Thus singing, they entered into the heathen burg.

For a short time after their arrival in Canterbury, they contented themselves with the little church of queen Bertha, St. Martin's, "dwelling," as Bede tells us in his beautiful summary of their manner of life, "after the example of the early Church, praying continually, watching and fasting, preaching to all they could reach, paying no heed to worldly matters, as things with which they had nothing to do, only accepting from those whom they taught just as much as was absolutely necessary for life, living themselves the life they taught, with hearts ready to suffer every adversity, ready even to die for that truth which they preached. What need to say any more? Some believed, some were baptised, because they admired the simplicity of their blameless lives and the sweetness of their heavenly teaching."

The public baptism of king Ethelbert was not long delayed, and the example of the chieftain, as was common among pagan people, was followed by crowds of his subjects.

Acting upon the directions of Pope Gregory, who watched the progress of the mission to Britain with the deepest interest, Augustine, before the close of 597, applied to the Gallic bishops for episcopal consecration. At Arles, archbishop Vergilius and other Frankish prelates formally consecrated him as archbishop of the English. Pope Gregory, in a letter to the Patriarch of Alexandria, mentions with extreme thankfulness that more than ten thousand Kentish men received baptism on the Christmas Day of that same year.

The influence of the Italian monk must have grown among the pagan Northmen settled in Kent with extraordinary rapidity, for we read that very soon after Augustine's return from his consecration as archbishop at Arles, the king gave him his royal hall or palace at Canterbury, together with the ruins of another old British church, he himself fixing his residence at Reculvers on the sea coast. The old British church was restored and rebuilt on a large scale; we read it had a nave and aisle and towers on the north and south. Two apses were constructed at the eastern and western end, each with its altar. The present metropolitan church of England, largely built by archbishop Lanfranc in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the mother church of English Christianity, arose on the foundation of this church of Augustine. It was then, as it is now, called Christ church.

Another ancient British church just outside the old Roman wall was rebuilt and dedicated to St. Pancras, probably at the suggestion of Pope Gregory, to whom the memory of the boy-martyr was especially dear, partly because the family of Pancras once owned the ground on the Cœlian Hill where stood the monastery of St. Andrew, of which Gregory had been abbot, and Augustine prior; partly because of the memory of the British boys in the slave-market at Rome, who had years before first turned Gregory's attention to Britain. The famous boy-martyr seemed

a fitting dedication for one of the first churches built by the mission, in the home of those never-to-be-forgotten slave children with the flaxen hair.

Around the Canterbury St. Pancras, Augustine planned and laid the foundation of that famous abbey which was eventually to bear his name. This abbey, which became in after-years one of the richest and most revered sanctuaries in Christendom, subsequently possessed a patrimony which at one time was said to have included 11,860 acres of land. It was to the abbot of this primitive foundation of Augustine, that Pope Leo IX., in 1056, some four and a half centuries later, gave the proud privilege of sitting in general councils in the first place after the abbot of Monte Casino, the mother-house of the great Benedictine order.

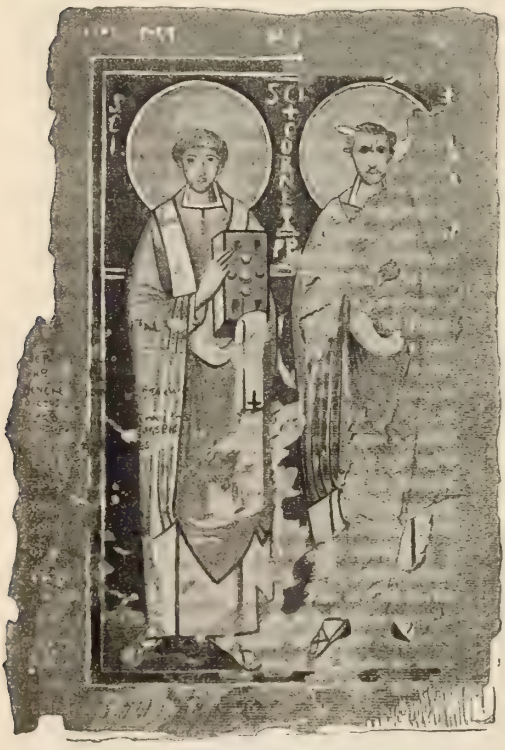
It was in 598, as it would seem, that Augustine wrote his well-known letter to his spiritual father in Rome, detailing all his successes among the heathen Jutes, and requesting advice respecting certain difficulties arising in his work. Some three years, however, passed before the replies came to him. They were brought by some carefully-chosen monks who were to assist the "Archbishop of the English" in his arduous task, three of whom became subsequently illustrious names in the story of the Church of England. The first two, Mellitus and Justus, in their turn succeeded Augustine as archbishops of Canterbury, and the third was the famous Paulinus, of whom we shall have much to say when we come to speak of the foundation work of Christianity in the land north of the Humber. This reinforcement of monks from Rome brought the answers of Gregory to the questions of Augustine, besides a great store of relics, sacred vessels, priestly robes, ornaments for the altar, and other things necessary to give effect to the pomp of religious services. Above all, the Roman pontiff sent to Britain certain very precious and valuable manuscripts. Some of these venerable books—the gift of Gregory—were still in existence at the era of the dissolution ; Leland, the learned secretary of Henry VIII., had seen them, and speaks of them with admiration.

The care and discrimination shown by this great pope in the selection of fitting men, and even of books and sacred furniture for the work of a distant mission, tells us something of the tireless spirit of Gregory, to whom nothing was too great or too small for his thoughts to dwell upon, if his Master's work was concerned. There is a touching passage in one of his extant letters, which speaks of the personal difficulties under which he constantly laboured. It was not only the ceaseless care of many churches, but acute bodily suffering which perplexed and harassed this generous and devoted bishop of Rome. His words are worth quoting: "For nearly two years," he says, "I have had to keep my bed, suffering such pain from gout, that I could hardly get up for three hours on festivals, to celebrate the solemnities of masses. . . . I am compelled to exclaim, 'Bring my soul out of prison.'"

At the same time Gregory sent Augustine a pall (*pallium*), a symbol of archiepiscopal jurisdiction, which he charged him only to wear in the celebration of mass. This celebrated vestment appears in the

time of Gregory to have been richly ornamented; and the wearer was warned to guard against self-complacency. This pallium, granted by Gregory to Augustine, appears in the arms of the arch-see of Canterbury. The simplest form of the pallium was worn by Alexandrian bishops in the fifth century; it seems to have been a simple white woollen scarf round the neck. A rich form of this garment became part of the imperial attire, and was granted by emperors as a mark of honour to patriarchs; then the popes began, originally in the emperor's name, or by his desire, to allow the use of the pall to certain bishops; to those who represented the Roman see; to some metropolitans, or to other prelates of influence or distinction. In the time of Gregory the Great it was thus variously granted: his language shows that it was splendid and somewhat cumbrous. Although in several cases it was an accompaniment of metropolitan dignity, it did not become a necessary badge of that dignity until a later stage in the development of papalism.*

ARMS OF SEE OF CANTERBURY.



EARLY FORM OF PALLIUM.
(*From a Fresco on the Tomb of Pope Cornelius and St. Cyprian, Cemetery of Callixtus, Rome.*)

The whole story of the mission of Augustine; his complete subserviency to his old master Gregory; the reproofs, warnings, encouragements he received from the great Roman bishop; the elaborate directions for the parcelling out of the still pagan England into dioceses, sent to him from Rome; the peculiar authority Augustine was to exercise in Britain but not in Gaul; all mark a great step in the development of the subsequent universal claim to spiritual dominion, made by the bishop of the Roman see. They help us to understand something of the bitterness which underlay the long conflict between the two great branches of the Western church—the Celtic and the Roman—which was to be fought out in many lands, but nowhere with more violence than in England.

It is perfectly clear that neither the ancient Roman-British church, nor its survivors in the mountains of Wales, nor the marvellous offshoot in Ireland, nor the great missionary organisation in Scotland, knew anything of the supremacy of the

* Professor Bright.

bishop who ruled in the traditional see of Rome. These strange claims of a world-wide spiritual dominion, which we find Pope Gregory the Great putting forth in the case of Augustine and the new England of the sixth and seventh centuries, and which laid the foundations of the yet wider and more lordly supremacy claimed and exercised by his successors—by men like Gregory VII. and Innocent III. — were never dreamed of by Patrick, David, Finnian, or Columba.

But to return to the story of Augustine in those few eventful years which succeeded the memorable landing at Ebbsfleet, and the rapid conversion of the Jutish king Ethelbert and the many thousands of his subjects dwelling round Canterbury and Reculvers. In that story, nothing is more interesting than the correspondence between Gregory in Rome and Augustine at Canterbury. The most important of these letters were sent by the hand of the monkish reinforcement to which we have referred, which arrived from Rome in the year 601, and which included the subsequently famous Mellitus, Justus, and Paulinus. Gregory, with his acute and penetrating intellect, after receiving an account from his former prior Augustine of his marvellous and undreamed-of success among the pagan Jutes of Kent, was quick to perceive the almost measureless future importance of a mission which had seemed at first but a forlorn and somewhat hopeless effort.

IMAGINES AD VIVVM EXPRESSAE
EX AEDICVLA SANCTI ANDREAE
PROPE BEATI GREGORII MAGNI ECCLESIAM
NECNON EX VITA EIVSDEM BEATI GREGORII
A IOANNE DIACONO LIB. IV. CAP. LXXXIII.
ET LXXXIV. CONSCRIPTA.

POPE GREGORY, HIS FATHER AND MOTHER.
(*From an Edition of the Life of Pope Gregory by John the Deacon, published in* 1615.*)

The Italian monks thus associated with Augustine's successful mission, besides the important letters and gifts to the new archbishop of the English, brought an epistle to the king Ethelbert and his queen. In the writing addressed to the king, Pope Gregory especially commends Augustine to him as one trained according to the monastic rule, full of the knowledge of the Scripture, and abounding in good works in the sight of God; he urged

* The original portraits were given by Gregory himself to the monastery of St. Andrew, now the church of San Gregory, Rome.

Ethelbert to listen devoutly to Augustine, faithfully to accomplish all that he told him; adding the curious words, "the more you listen to what he will tell you on the part of God, the more will God grant his prayers to Him on your behalf."

Augustine had propounded various momentous questions to the Roman pontiff for his opinion and advice. The replies of Gregory were very wise, full of thoughtful consideration, and some of them might be pondered even in our own day with advantage. Bede devotes several chapters of his undying history to these interesting and important questions and replies. One especially deserves to be remembered, which had it been more faithfully followed, might have healed many subsequent feuds. Augustine had spent some time in Gaul, and had there noticed in church discipline and practice many customs very different from what he had seen in Rome. He had doubtless heard much of the mighty Celtic church in Ireland; something, too, of the network of Christian communities in Scotland founded by the saintly Columba, whose death had taken place only a few days after he had landed on the Kentish shore. Very different, indeed, were many of the uses of these great and flourishing Christian communities from the uses of Roman churches among which Augustine had received his training. What was he to do in his new and rapidly-growing church in the south of the island? The answer of Gregory was a very wise and noble one, and should be for all time. "Whatever custom," wrote the sagacious and far-seeing pope, "be found really good and pleasing to God, whether in the church of Italy or Gaul, or in any other, he was to adopt it and use it in his new Church of England." "*Things*," said Gregory, "*are not to be loved for the sake of places, but places for the sake of things.*"

"It often happens that the first turn given to the spirit of an institution lasts long after its first founder has passed away, and in channels quite different from those which he contemplated; and when we think of what the Church of England is now, I confess there is a satisfaction in thinking that in this respect, at least, it has in some way fulfilled the wishes of Gregory the Great. There is no church in the world which has combined such various and opposite advantages from other churches more exclusive than itself; none in which various characters and customs from the opposite parts of the Christian world could have been able to find such shelter and refuge." *

Much of Gregory's advice and direction on other points was couched in the same spirit of adaptation and conciliation. "He had thought much," wrote this wise bishop who ruled the Church of Rome some thirteen centuries ago, "on the subject, and he had come to the conclusion that heathen temples were not to be destroyed, but turned wherever possible into Christian churches; that the droves of oxen which used to be killed in sacrifice were still to be killed for feasts for the poor"; and he gives as the reason for such counsels, that "for hard and rough minds, it is impossible to cut away abruptly all their old customs, because he who wishes to reach the highest place must ascend by steps and not jumps."

Very urgent were the Roman prelate's

* Dean Stanley.

warnings against undue elation on the part of Augustine, induced by his conspicuous success in his mission; above all things, spiritual pride must be guarded against. Gregory's warning, tender and true, has the gospel mark upon it. He reminds his "dearest brother" that Christ once bade the seventy rejoice not in their power over the spirits, but rather that their names were written in heaven; and then, fearful of having wounded his great and successful disciple, he adds, with an exquisite tenderness worthy of the apostle Paul, of whom Gregory was not an unworthy follower, "I have a sure hope that your sins are already forgiven, and that you are a chosen instrument for bringing others to the same mercy." Gregory concludes his beautiful letter with these striking words, well calculated to pour deep joy into Augustine's heart: "If there is joy in heaven over one penitent, what must there be over a penitent nation! Let us then all say, '*Gloria in excelsis.*'"

But the letters of the Roman pontiff to the missionary archbishop, written in 601, after careful and protracted consideration of the news of the reception of Christianity once more in that far-away "lost" island, contained more than advice, warning, and counsel suitable to the temporary exigencies of missionary preaching; they provided a well-matured plan for moulding the new Christianity of the English people of the great island into an ordered form; a plan, in fact, for the ecclesiastical organisation of the whole island. It aimed evidently at the establishment of a great church of the Roman obedience.

It contained, however, one curious error. Pope Gregory, in sketching out the plan for the organisation of a Christian England for his disciple and friend, the missionary Augustine, had before him apparently the records of the old Roman province of Britain; all that had happened since—the total sweeping away of the old landmarks, the almost total disappearance of the Roman cities—was passed over. In the Britain of the Romans, London in the south, and York in the north, were the capital cities, and Pope Gregory arranged that London and York should be the centres of the church of the island. Augustine was to be the bishop of London, with twelve suffragan bishops in the south; and as the missionary work advanced in the north, York was to have another bishop as metropolitan with twelve suffragans likewise, and to possess an equal rank with the bishop metropolitan of London.

But London, in the days of Augustine, was a heathen cluster of dwellings and a centre of little influence, and long years were to elapse before York regained anything of its old wealth and importance. Much was to happen, many pages of eventful history had to be written, before anything like the great plan sketched out by the master hand of Gregory, was even in part carried into effect. As the Roman bishop had, with true prophetic insight, foreseen, the whole island with extraordinary rapidity adopted Christianity; "but the zeal, life, and energy of the new English Christianity were concentrated not in the south-east of the great island, not in Kent, round the rapidly rising churches and the monastic homes of Canterbury, and the scene of Augustine's

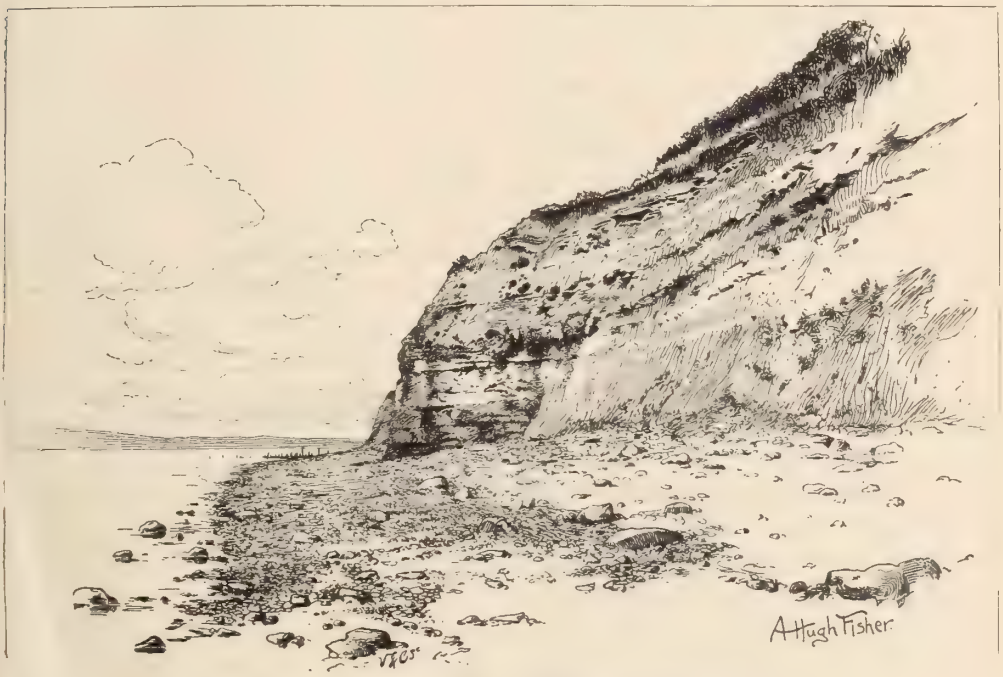
successful labours, but in the far north of Britain; and that north looked for its religious centre, not to Rome, but to the Celtic church of Ireland." The great work of inducing the North-folk, the masters of England, to adopt Christianity, was carried out, not by the Roman Augustine and his band of Italian mission-monks of Canterbury, but by the Celtic Aidan and Cuthbert, who were trained in centres utterly unknown to both Gregory and Augustine; in centres possessing names which, indeed, to those ears accustomed to the music of the immemorial Latin speech, would have sounded strange and barbarous—*Iona* and *Lindisfarne*.

In the course of this interesting and important correspondence between Augustine, the new "archbishop of the English," and Gregory, the Pope of Rome, we meet with short notices or directions from Rome, intended to guide Augustine in his future relations with the remains of the ancient British Church still existing in Wales and the West of the island. The references in question in Bede's history are very short, but, at the same time, very clear; they give, as far as the Roman pontiff could give, absolute control to Augustine over that ancient church and all its ministers. "As for all the bishops of Britain," wrote Gregory, "we commit them to your care, that the unlearned may be taught, the weak strengthened, and the perverse corrected by authority." And in the letter which accompanied the gift of the pallium to the new archbishop a yet more comprehensive mandate was given to Augustine, placing all bishops in Britain—"*omnes Britanniæ sacerdotes*"*—under his authority, giving as a reason for this supremacy thus entrusted, "that they (the *sacerdotes*) may learn by your (Augustine's) word and by your life how they must believe, and how they must live in order to fulfil their office and gain an inheritance in heaven."

Now it seems inconceivable that Gregory and Augustine were ignorant of the power and influence at this time of the ancient British Church in Wales; or of the vast authority and flourishing state of the Celtic church in Ireland; or of Columba's mission from Iona, so widely extended and so beloved in Scotland; or of the mighty work of the strange and fervid Irish disciple of the great monastery of Bangor in Ulster—the imperious, but saintly, Columban—in central and western Europe, whose first great monastery of Luxeuil, the mother house of so many world-famed communities, for some years had been riveting the attention of all earnest and devout souls who cared for religious things. That Pope Gregory, with his vast experience and unerring sagacity, knowing, as he must have well known, the power and life of Celtic Christianity, with a stroke of the pen should have thus ignored the existence of the mother Celtic church—poor, perhaps, in wealth, but not in numbers; banished to the wild and desolate mountains of Wales and Cumberland, but still with its old organisation, with its bishops, with its vast monasteries, with its immemorial traditions—seems positively unthinkable.

* Montalembert has been followed in translating *sacerdotes* as bishops. Some prefer to render the word here used by Bede as "priests;" but the same conclusion must be arrived at, whatever rendering be adopted—namely, that to Augustine the whole clergy of Britain were to be subject.

It must, surely, have been an intentional slight, a carefully-thought-out act, when he formally placed his Italian friend and disciple Augustine over all the Celtic bishops in Britain, and, by what seems to us a strangely arbitrary command, declared that "*omnes Britanniæ sacerdotes*" British bishops, which we have next to relate, were the first beginnings of the long religious feud which distracted the new England of the North-men, and which, as we shall see, for good or for evil, ended in the triumph of Rome and in the discomfiture and



AUST CLIFF.
(*By permission, from a Photo by Charles P. MacCarthy, Esq.*)

(whatever sense we may give to *sacerdotes*, whether as including all the priests of Britain or simply the British bishops) should be subject to the *Italian* archbishop of the English. It seems all but certain that the great and far-seeing Roman prelate was determined, as far as in him lay, to crush the Celtic organisation, and to substitute in its place the Roman order; and that the lofty pretensions advanced by Augustine in the meeting with the eventual disappearance of the old Celtic church.

Very soon after the receipt of his pallium, and the letters and directions from Rome, Augustine arranged the memorable meeting with the British bishops of the old church, the successors of the men who had taken refuge from the Saxon and Engle conquerors in Wales. We have the story of the meeting told in the bright and interesting pages of Bede; but we must remember that Bede

was the strong partisan of Rome, was the earnest opponent of the old Celtic uses, and that, as we shall see, one of the few sombre and stained "memories" of the saintly monk of Jarrow — perhaps the solitary one—occurs in the course of this recital.

The place of meeting between the representatives of the two churches which were then dividing Western Christendom is traditionally Aust or Aust Cliff—the Cliff of Augustine—a low, reddish cliff overlooking the broad estuary of the river Severn, and the low green hills of Wales between the modern Chepstow and Cardiff. The prospect from the Cliff of Augustine is singularly attractive and suggestive. On the one side, inland, the rising ground and woods slope upwards towards the Downs of Clifton, and in the far distance the loftier hills of Somerset, the scene of so many desperate encounters between the Northmen and the Britons, but which, when Augustine met the British bishops, had become the undisputed heritage of the West Saxon; a portion of that fair kingdom soon to be known far beyond the confines of the island as Wessex, the territory of that royal house from which has sprung the Sovereigns of England for more than a thousand years. In front lay the broad blue waters of the Severn, that great and often stormy estuary which had effectually barred the Northmen from entering Wales by the south. Fringing the Severn were the low green hills of Gwent and distant Morganwg; while behind these hills of Gwent on the blue-grey horizon, rose a range of yet higher hills, the outspurs of those unstormed fortresses of Wales, as yet untrodden by any Northman's foot.

The conference, as might have been expected, was unsatisfactory. On the one side, Augustine required obedience and submission, alleging his commission from the apostolic see; on the other, the British bishops and leading men of the ancient church were evidently astonished at the position of superiority which he assumed. There is absolutely no trace in the ancient Celtic church of any acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Romish see. Indeed, in that "Life of Columba" by the abbot Adamnan, to which we have so frequently referred, and which was written in A.D. 692–697, there is no hint whatever as to any acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Roman see on the part of the Celtic church, nor even any *allusion* at all to Rome or her bishop; and Adamnan emphatically was no blind admirer of Celtic uses, which, in fact, he subsequently abandoned for the sake of Catholic unity of practice.

They agreed, however, to another and more formal conference, in which the more important differences between the uses of the ancient church and the uses of the church Augustine had established in Kent might be fully discussed. The second conference appears to have been held shortly after the first. The date of these meetings was A.D. 602–603. Bede is our authority for the report of what took place at these meetings of Augustine and the bishops and monks of the ancient British Church; and as Bede, trained rigidly in the Roman obedience, was naturally an earnest and enthusiastic partisan of the Roman party, we may be quite sure that his report omits nothing which could be construed as favourable to Augustine and his cause.

The second conference included on the part of the ancient church seven British bishops; these were accompanied by many most learned men, especially from the great monastery of Bangor Iscoed. The Monk of Jarrow tells a curious story of an incident which preceded the meeting, and which probably was founded on fact, for it bears strongly upon the real point of difference between Augustine and the British divines — the alleged supremacy of Rome.

The British delegates sought before the Conference, as the story relates, the advice of a hermit in much repute for his sanctity and wisdom. They asked the holy man whether he would advise them to change their "uses" for the "uses" pressed upon them by the strange missionary bishop from Rome. The answer was: "*If he* [the stranger] *be a man of God, follow him.*" They asked for further information: "How shall we ascertain if he be a man of God?" "Our Lord," said the wise man, "spoke of Himself as meek and lowly in heart. If this Augustine, when you approach him, rises to meet you, then be assured that he is a servant of Christ—listen to him then obediently. If, on the other hand, he does not rise up to greet you, but treats you with contempt as inferiors, then show contempt in your turn." "The meeting followed," continues Bede's narrative; "Augustine received the British bishops and the learned monks without attempting to rise from his seat."

There is no doubt, when we review this evidently true story, that Augustine determined to assert his pre-eminent dignity as archbishop of the English, and carried out the mandate which he received from Pope Gregory to treat the bishops and priests as subject to him. With these pretensions there was, of course, no chance of any agreement between them. Augustine proceeded to insist upon three points being conceded to him:—

(1) Easter must be kept by the British Church at the same time as the Roman custom had directed. (The difference of the Celtic use in the reckoning when the Easter feast should be kept, will be discussed later.)

(2) The British must agree to perform Baptism according to the manner of the Roman and Apostolic Church. (What this difference consisted in is uncertain.)

(3) They must join with him in preaching the Word of the Lord to their conquerors the English (Engle and Saxon) peoples.

The answer they gave to Augustine was short and decisive—"We will do none of these things." Then they added what was probably the real reason of their refusal even to consider his points—"We will not have you as archbishop;" for they considered among themselves, "If he would not now rise up to receive us courteously, how much more will he look down on us as not worthy of consideration if we should acknowledge ourselves as subject to his authority?" and so the conference ended.

But the extraordinary bitterness which the long-drawn-out conflict between the two churches—the Roman and the Celtic —created was sadly demonstrated in the closing scene of this memorable conference, in which Augustine is represented by Bede as threatening the British Church, if they would not join in unity with their brethren —*i.e.* with him and the members of his

Italian mission in preaching to the English peoples—with the vengeance of death, which, he said, they would receive at the hands of the English nation. The comment of the Monk of Jarrow on this scene of the conference is perhaps the saddest bit of writing in his invaluable history, and is another of the many proofs how sadly the noblest minds are influenced for evil by religious dissensions, especially when human motives, as was too clearly the case here, enter into the grounds of the dispute. Alluding to the prophecy of evil pronounced against the British Church by Augustine, Bede adds, "all which, through the dispensation of the Divine judgment, fell out just as he had predicted;" and then proceeds to relate how afterwards (in 613) Ethelfrith, the fierce Engle king of Northumbria, warring against Brocmael, king of Powys, on the occasion of a battle between the Engle host and the British under the walls of the city now known as Chester, seeing a large body of British priests, including a number of monks from the neighbouring monastery of Bangor Iscoed, standing near the engaging armies, and praying for the success of the British, gave orders for their massacre (see p. 116). Bede says 1,200 of these monks and priests were there slain, and—forgetting for a moment the noble work of Columba, and the Iona mission of Aidan, and how close and intimate was the connection of Columba's and Aidan's mother-church of Ireland with the ancient British church—does not hesitate to apply to these helpless unarmed victims, whose only crime was that they were praying for their hapless country, the word *nefandæ* (execrable). "Thus," he adds, "was fulfilled the prediction of the holy bishop Augustine, though he had himself long before been taken up into the heavenly kingdom" [Augustine died in 605, eight years before the massacre] "that those perfidious men should feel the vengeance of temporal death also, because they had despised the offer of eternal salvation."

After the massacre Ethelfrith destroyed and sacked the great monastery of Bangor Iscoed. All this, however, happened in 613, and has only been related here to show how, according to Bede, the prophecy or curse of Augustine, pronounced against the British Church for declining to submit to his authority and to aid him in his work, received its terrible fulfilment.

After the rejection of Augustine's overtures to the bishops and monks of the remnant of the British Church in Wales, he returned to Canterbury and his Jutish followers in Kent. It must have been but a sad home-coming for the Roman missionary archbishop and his faithful companions. Augustine, with all his faults, was no ordinary man, was intensely earnest, and was devoted to the cause to which he had consecrated his life; and the consciousness of utter failure must have pressed hard upon him as he journeyed back to Canterbury through that strange, unfriendly, desolated Britain, with its pagan conquerors just beginning to settle themselves in the ruined cities and empty homesteads of the vanished people they had taken so many weary years to drive out.

The first years of Augustine's life in Kent had been years of success—undreamed-of success. From the hour of landing at Ebbsfleet until that sad meeting

with the bishops and abbots of the old Celtic church of Britain, by the blue waters of

kindly welcome, and the steady friendship of the Christian queen of the Kentish Jutes

"'WE WILL DO NONE OF THESE THINGS'" (*p.* 95).

the Severn sea in the west, all had gone well with him and his companions. The Jutish king Ethelbert had given them a

had won them a patient, ever-friendly hearing. King and queen had set the example, and the thanes and people followed the

royal lead, and Kent, outwardly at least, accepted the teaching Augustine had to give them. Churches were built, monastic buildings arose, the sacred mysteries of the faith were reverently celebrated, and the Italian missionary monk had been able to report to Rome the conversion of a heathen people. From headquarters every possible recognition had been received by the successful missionary. The Jutish city of Canterbury had been made the seat of an archbishop. The pallium, the highest honour bestowed by Rome, had been conferred on the head of the mission. Valuable books, a store of precious relics, and above all a reinforcement of trusted monks, had been dispatched by Augustine's friend and master, Pope Gregory, deservedly known in history as "the Great." All seemed to prosper in that new and dangerous mission to the famous, far-distant island which had become the prey of fierce Northern pagan invaders, and which for so many years the soul of the earnest and devoted bishop of Rome had longed to convert and to claim as part of his flock.

Then came the visit of the Italian archbishop of the Jutes to the far west, the story of which has been related, and the utter failure to establish friendly relations with the monks and bishops of the ancient British church. Augustine was, no doubt, very much amazed to find so powerful a Christian organisation, where he had expected only to meet with a weak, disorganised company of fugitives. He found a church poor, no doubt, and scattered; but strong in memories, faithful to the traditions of a great past, and closely united in teaching and practices with that strange and powerful Christian Ireland, which in the days of Augustine was already making itself—with its missionary zeal and undoubted learning—felt as a power far beyond the confines of its own remote, sea-girt island. But of Rome and her pretensions to supreme power, the refugees in the west and their powerful friends in Ireland knew nothing. They even scoffed at these pretensions, when they heard of them from Augustine, and the abbots and bishops of the British communities in the west absolutely refused to acknowledge the authority, or to recognise in any way the supremacy, of the Rome-appointed archbishop of the Jutish pagan tribes in the far east of Britain.

Of Augustine's want of wisdom in pressing his claims of supremacy, evidently hitherto unclaimed, there is no doubt. With all the acknowledged nobleness of the man, he was evidently utterly wanting in those supreme graces of Christian character which in all ages have so materially aided the really great missionary founders of churches. His master would never have hopelessly alienated those successors of a noble line of saintly men like David and Iltud, Kentigern and Asaph, as did Augustine. The pretensions of Rome to a supreme authority would have been advanced in a very different spirit by a statesman like Gregory the Great. The first archbishop of the English was in many respects a true imitator of St. Paul; ever unsparing of himself, loyal and devoted, earnest and true. But in his dealings with the representatives of the ancient church of Britain, which surely deserved the most tender and loving, even respectful treatment at his hands, he forgot utterly

St. Paul's grand definition of true Christianity, which while it "hopeth all things," still "beareth all things, endureth all things."

Legendary history has been busy with the three or four years which remained to the first archbishop of Canterbury. No one who has made any study of the story of Augustine doubts his zeal and earnestness. This was shown in the strong pressure he put on his convert Ethelbert to use his influence as over-lord of tribes and districts beyond the limits of his own little kingdom of Kent, in favour of Christianity. These efforts, which seem to have been confined to the districts immediately south and north of London (which in the first years of the seventh century was again rapidly rising into importance), were represented by later chroniclers, desirous to magnify the influence of the Roman mission, as missionary enterprises extending over a large portion of the island. Augustine is painted by these Romanists of a later age as the apostle of all England, not of a small portion of it. They tell us of his proceeding to Dorsetshire and Oxfordshire, even as far north as Ely; and do not scruple to tell us of many miracles worked by the indefatigable, tireless apostle. But these stories for the most part are utterly baseless. What is now known as Kent and Surrey no doubt became Christian; and a bishopric was certainly established at Rochester by king Ethelbert, and Justus, the faithful friend and companion of Augustine, was appointed its first bishop. A church was built at Hrof's Castle on the Medway, the modern Rochester; and, in memory of the loved monastery on the Cœlian Hill at Rome, the sacred house where Augustine had lived as monk, and where Gregory had been abbot, the Rochester church was dedicated to St. Andrew.

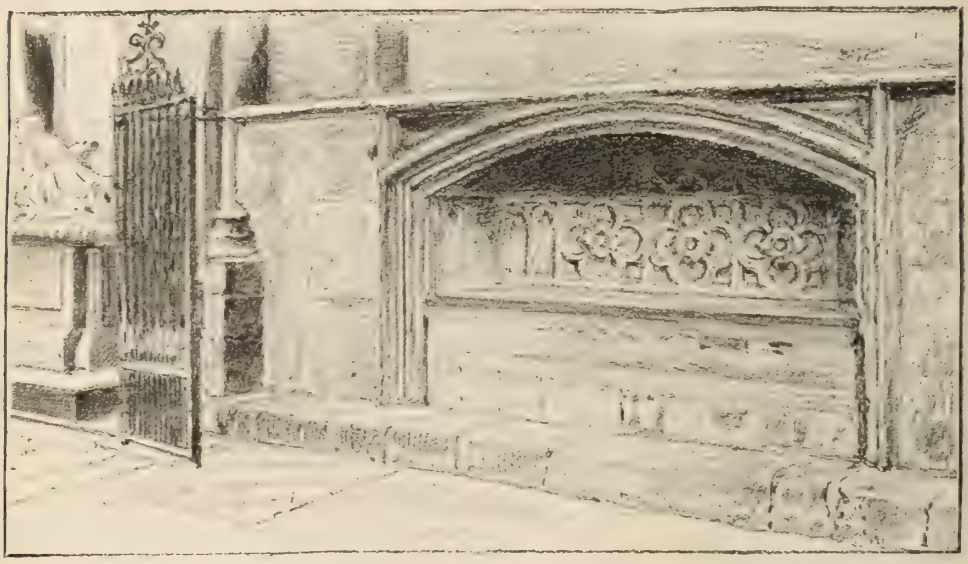
Ethelbert — Augustine's friend among the North-folk who had conquered Britain —occupied a high and powerful position among the mightiest chieftains of the conquerors, and his influence extended far beyond the confines of his own actual kingdom of Kent. The districts now occupied by the modern counties of Middlesex and Essex seem to have been very closely attached to the Jutish king. The East Saxon king Sledda had married Ethelbert's sister Ricula, and their son Sæberht, Ethelbert's nephew, at the beginning of the seventh century was king of the East Saxon peoples.

The chief city of these parts was London —in the old days before the coming of the North-folk a flourishing and wealthy centre. Its unrivalled position on the banks of a noble river, and its ready access to the ports of Gaul, had marked it out in very early days as an emporium of commerce. Although wrecked and utterly ruined by the invaders, it rapidly recovered something at least of its ancient importance, and Augustine chose it as the site of a bishopric. Mellitus, one of the little group of monks dispatched by Gregory to assist Augustine in the work, was sent as a missionary bishop to the East Saxons. He had considerable success, and Sæberht encouraged him to build the first St. Paul's in London. We must picture to ourselves, however, a very different London from the mediæval city which rapidly grew up. The London of Sæberht lay entirely to the

east; on the west of St. Paul's lay mostly waste lands; for long after that day "the precincts of St. Paul embraced a large district around it, which stretched almost from the river to Newgate, and from near the wall as far inland as Cheapside."

Perhaps in imitation of Augustine's work at Canterbury, Mellitus determined to build a home for a monastic colony apart from the mother church. Tradition tells us he chose a spot amid the waste lands lying to the west of St. Paul's. Some two miles down the river, on a small marshy island formed by an arm of the Thames, a tract utterly desolate and uninhabited, a site was selected for the new monastery. On this island of the Thames, which, from the bushes and thickets with which it was covered, received the name of Thorney, was probably erected about A.D. 604 the first West Minster.

Twice in the splendid story of the sacred foundation of Sæberht the king and Mellitus the bishop, has the abbey been pulled down to make room for a new and more stately fane. Nothing remains now of the church of Sæberht and Mellitus of the seventh century — little of the abbey of Edward the Confessor of the eleventh century. But the work of Henry III. of the thirteenth century is still with us, and is rightly accounted one of the architectural glories of England. A plain and undistinguished tomb, to the south of the altar of the stately abbey, is still shown as the traditional resting-place of Sæberht the East Saxon, the royal founder of the first church and monastery. No spot in Europe is hallowed by such memories, or surrounded by a veneration like that with which Englishmen regard the grey, time-worn House of God—the successor of the West Minster of Sæberht. And with good reason. Within its walls a



SÆBERHT'S TOMB, WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

long line of sovereigns have received the crown of England. It has ever been the favourite last resting-place of our monarchs, and of the noblest of our land. Within the precincts the assembly of the nation has ever met; and though well-nigh thirteen storied centuries have passed since its first solemn consecration, the name of West Minster as the great national sanctuary has lost nothing of its ancient power with the hearts of Englishmen. It belongs to the proudest and most stately of our churches, as well as to that mighty palace, the home of our great national Parliament, the model and pattern of all the popular assemblies of Europe.

A curious tradition says that it was never consecrated by mortal ceremonies, for that, on the night preceding the day fixed for the first dedication by king and bishop, bishop Mellitus in his rude tent on Thorney Island, waiting for the day to dawn which should witness the august and solemn service, was warned not to repeat a ceremony already performed by St. Peter and a choir of angels. A fisherman related to the bishop how he ferried a stranger over the Thames in the night hour; how he watched the unknown cross the threshold of the empty church, and, as he passed within the doors, a bright light filled the building. Music such as he had never heard before pealed forth, and clouds of the sweetest incense filled the air. After a time the strange visitant returned, and bade the fisherman go and tell Mellitus

"BISHOP DAGAN DISCUSSED WITH LAURENCE THE POINTS OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ROMAN AND CELTIC COMMUNIONS" (*p.* 106).

what he had seen and heard, and how he whom Christians call St. Peter had himself consecrated the church which Sæberht had built. This strange story has come down from generation to generation, and is repeated in different forms in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Lives of Edward the Confessor.

In all these records, in which the supernatural is often mingled with plain every-day events, it is not difficult to separate history from legend; and the story of the great work of Augustine and his missionary companions in Kent and in some districts lying north and east of Kent, rests upon evidence clear and undisputed. The cathedral and monastery in Canterbury, the cathedral of St. Andrew at Rochester, the first church of St. Paul's in London, the West Minster of St. Peter on Thorney Island, the "Dooms" or laws of Ethelbert, the Christian king of Kent, the very beginning of recorded English legislation, which contain important enactments of rights conceded to the Christian church—all this tells us that the work of the Italian mission under Augustine bore not a little solid and enduring fruit. That he evangelised the whole island, or ever preached throughout a large portion of it, is absolutely mythical; but that he laid the strong and permanent foundations of Christianity in Kent and the surrounding districts, is indisputable, and much of his work has lasted to our own day and time.

With the successful establishment of the outlying stations in London and Rochester Augustine's labours were finished. Worn out and exhausted by his busy and active middle life, the Italian monk felt that his end was near. Curiously enough, his great master, the Pope Gregory, who had trained him in the Roman monastery on the Cœlian Hill, and had chosen him to carry out the mission to the pagan conquerors of Britain—the cherished project nourished by Gregory during so many toil-filled years—died only two months before his favourite disciple, the archbishop of the English, fell asleep in his Canterbury home. To the last he had watched over his pupil and follower, advising and encouraging him to the end.

Augustine, aware that he too was dying, arranged for the anxious matter of his successor, and with his own hands consecrated Laurence. Laurence had been with him from the first day of his landing at Ebbsfleet on the Kentish coast, and had shared with him the joys of his successes, and sympathised in the sorrows caused by his failures. He, perhaps alone among men, was thoroughly acquainted with Augustine's plans for the future, alone perhaps comprehended the views of the dead Pope Gregory, in the difficult matter of the disputes with the abbots and bishops of the ancient British church. This consecration to a succession was a rare, though not an unknown practice in the ancient Christian church.

It was in the month of May, 605,* that Augustine died. The body was laid temporarily outside the still uncompleted monastery church of St. Peter and St. Paul, afterwards known as St. Augustine's Abbey. Laurence, as had been arranged, succeeded to his dignities and responsibilities. Eight years later, in the year of our Lord 613, the abbey church of St. Peter and St. Paul was completed, and solemnly consecrated

* Some give 604 as the date of the death.

by Laurence, the archbishop, in the presence of Ethelbert and his court. There the remains of Augustine were deposited in the north transept. In the twelfth century they were again removed, and laid under the high altar at the east end. Queen Bertha, who did so much to assist Augustine when he first landed, and her Frankish chaplain, Luitbrand, were laid to rest in the same abbey church. After three years, in 616, the body of the Kentish king was also laid by the side of his queen. "Somewhere in the field around the ruins of the once stately abbey the remains of the four friends Ethelbert and Bertha, Luitbrand and Augustine, probably repose, and may possibly be discovered."*

The term "great missionary archbishop" is a well-deserved title, for Augustine is emphatically to be reckoned among the great ones of England. Modern historians, both in our own country and in foreign lands, have often loved to describe him as a man of irresolution, and yet obstinate; as unreasonably puffed up by his early successes, and then equally unreasonably dejected by his subsequent failures. They paint him, in his dealings with the ancient British church, as proud and unyielding; as one utterly incapable of seeing any virtue or beauty of character in men who ventured to disagree with him; as even malevolent and cruel in his denunciation of a church which declined to pay him homage and to obey his orders.

That there are shadows resting on the fair fame of the first archbishop of the English, is undoubted. That he failed on some momentous occasions to play the part either of the tender and devoted saint, or of the far-seeing statesman, no fair historian would seek to deny. But his faults—such as they were—seem owing, in large measure, to his earlier surroundings. He had lived in the comparative seclusion of a monastery until he was past middle age; and the life of a religious house was not adapted to teach men the difficult secret of government, or of gaining the affection and confidence of others who had been trained in different schools of thought. To win over to the ways and discipline of Rome a church like that which he found in Western Britain — a powerful community, learned and earnest, wedded to their own peculiar rites and customs handed down to them from an immemorial antiquity; strengthened, too, by the fact that they and their fathers had passed through the bitter experiences of the Anglo-Saxon conquest—needed a very different envoy from the monk Augustine; devoted and intensely in earnest, it is true, but at the same time stern, rigid, unbending; convinced that his ways, the ways of Gregory and Rome, alone were right; persuaded that his views, the views of Rome upon all points, unimportant as well as vital, alone were correct; that any deviation in ritual or practice was sternly reprehensible; that any church not in close communion with Rome was heretical, even scarcely deserving the common name of Christian.

It is difficult to understand Augustine's apparent ignorance of the antiquity of the British church, or upon what grounds he claimed pre-eminence of rank in such an ancient hierarchy; but, with our scanty knowledge, it is unfair to condemn the great missionary for his conduct in such a

* Stanley's "Memorials of Canterbury."

crisis of his life, when that conduct was the result of his life-long training. His failure to conciliate the ancient British church—a failure which, in the eyes of so many writers, has cast a deep shadow over his really successful career—was only the first scene in that eventful drama, the unfolding of which must be related as this history advances; the drama in which the two great divisions of the Church of the West contested for the mastery. He was only the loyal and devoted agent of that mighty Italian Church which had sent him forth as its missionary, and cannot be blamed for his unswerving fidelity; his only fault lay in his want of skill and tact. But apart from this disastrous episode, his was a grand and noble career, crowned, too, with a success conspicuous as it was deserved.

The success was indeed great and marked. "He had converted a typical English monarch; he had baptised multitudes of Kentish proselytes; he had secured a formal and public acceptance by a national assembly of Christian obligations, and of the church as an organised institution; he had planted offshoots of the Kentish church in London and Rochester; he had established in Canterbury a centre for future church extension; he had definitely connected the reviving Christianity in Britain with the theological culture and ecclesiastical discipline of the continental Western church."* He had, in a word, deserved the laudation of the ancient English Council, which, when appointing a day in his honour, described him as having brought to the English people "the knowledge of their heavenly country."

* Prof. Bright, "Early English Church."

And the success was well deserved; for, in spite of dangers and difficulties, he was ever the earnest and laborious toiler for God; ever loyal and devoted, utterly unsparing of himself; ever one who, by the example of his self-denying, self-sacrificing life, commended the beautiful religion which he preached. This was the secret of his success among the Jutish pagans of Kent. These simple German warriors, from the king downwards, loved him, and accepted with childlike trust the truths he told them of. Augustine was no doubt a preacher of rare power, and a teacher of surpassing excellence; but the true secret of his wonderful success among the heathen German race, some of whose bravest warriors he brought to Christ, lay in the power of his beautiful example. He lived the life he came to preach.

From the year 605 until 616, when the old king Ethelbert died, some ten or eleven years, Christianity under Laurence, the new archbishop, quietly held its own, without making much way outside Kent. The picture of Laurence's life is lovingly painted by Bede, who writes how "Laurence began his archiepiscopate with strenuous efforts to extend the foundations of the church, and took pains to carry up its fabric to the due height by the frequent utterance of holy exhortation and the continual example of pious conduct."

The most notable event in this quiet period was another futile attempt at union with the Celtic church in the West, and an earnest appeal to the Irish Christians, remonstrating with them for the seemingly unbrotherly conduct of a certain Bishop Dagan, a monk of the famous monastery

BURIAL OF KING ETHELBERT (*p.* 105).

of Bangor, in Ulster, and bishop of Inverdaoile in Wexford, who had visited him in Canterbury. This bishop, delegated by the great Irish church, evidently discussed at length with Laurence the points of difference between the Roman and Celtic communions, but no agreement was come to between them. Bede, briefly recounting the results of the conference, does not hesitate to characterise the Celtic usages as "the errors of the Britons." From his words it is quite clear that there was a general harmony of use and agreement in doctrine, government, and ritual, between the British church in the western portions of the island, the Scotch churches—mostly the foundations of the Irish Columba—the great church in Ireland, and the many foreign houses scattered over Europe, the splendid fruits of the labours of Columban and his companions. But, as we have seen in the case of the policy exercised by Rome with reference to the vast Columban monasteries on the Continent, there was no disposition on the part of Rome to make any concessions. The Celtic church—whether at Luxeuil in Burgundy, at Clonard in Ireland, at Bangor in Wales, at Iona in Scotland—*must submit* to the ritual and use of Rome; must acknowledge her supreme authority, or else be reckoned as a church wedded to error, and unworthy of Catholic communion.

To exact this uncompromising obedience was, no doubt, the burthen of the orders which archbishop Laurence received from headquarters at Rome. Such, no doubt, was the substance of his requirements in his conference with the Irish bishop, Dagan. A formal epistle of Laurence's, quoted by Bede, addressed to "Our very dear brethren the Lords Bishops and Abbots throughout all Scotland" (the term Scotland in those days included Ireland) reads as follows: "Laurentius, Mellitus, and Justus, servants of the servants of God. When the Apostolic See—according to the universal custom which it has followed elsewhere—sent us to these western countries to preach the faith to pagan peoples, we came to this island Britain without possessing any previous knowledge of its inhabitants. Believing that they all followed the customs of the universal Church, we held in great veneration the piety of the Britons and the Scots [this term includes, as always, the Irish]. When we came to know the errors of the Britons, we thought the Scots had been better; but now that the Bishop Dagan has been with us, and now that the Abbot Columbanus has been in Gaul, we know that the Scots differ in nothing in their practices from the Britons; for the bishop not only refused to partake of our hospitality, but even would not so much as eat in our house."

This singular letter to the heads of the Irish church, then rapidly becoming famous for its learning and devoted piety throughout the western world, sets before us with marvellous clearness, in a very few words, the attitude of Rome towards the Celtic churches in Ireland, Scotland, Britain, and Gaul, and gives us the key to the long struggle which followed between the Celtic and Roman churches. It seems that Rome before the time of Gregory the Great had no conception of the vitality and power of Christianity in the far West; apparently she had thought of the fellow-worshippers in those distant countries as well-nigh

overwhelmed by the flood of pagan barbarians from the North, and that if any survived that desolating conquest, it was but a poor remnant, few in number and without organisation or influence. The marvellous work of Columban in Gaul, the reception of Augustine by the Christian Britons on the banks of the Severn, the fast-growing reputation of the Irish monastic schools, all came as a revelation to the Roman church, which, in the reconstruction of society in Europe after the collapse of the old empire, dreamed of a universal sovereignty in religious matters. Rome all of a sudden found herself confronted with a whole network of churches, numerous and organised, inspired with no ordinary missionary zeal, and, above all, armed with all the resources of learning.

It was indeed a startling phenomenon which presented itself, this resurrection of an older Christianity—a Christianity which claimed an apostolic origin for its peculiar rites and customs, and which absolutely refused even to consider the claim of the See of Rome to a universal, or to a partial supremacy. The vast religious communities and the learned schools of Ireland, the pious and devoted disciples of Columba of Iona, the remnant of the ancient British Christians, the numerous and powerful religious houses daily increasing in numbers and power on the continent of Europe—offshoots of Columban's world-renowned monastery of Luxeuil—looked upon the claim of Rome and her mighty pontiffs to a universal religious sovereignty as a novel thing; as a usurpation to be resisted to the bitter end.

The letter of Laurence the archbishop, Augustine's successor, in the first years of the seventh century, addressed to the leading men of the Irish communities, reveals exactly the feeling of Rome, on the other hand, at this juncture, towards the Celtic churches of the West. It breathes a spirit of intense surprise, burning indignation, and unalterable purpose of maintaining its lordly claims; but it betrays no idea, gives no hint, of mutual concession.

The question to be solved was—what form of Christianity would eventually be established in Britain? Save in the south-east corner of the isles, where Roman Christianity was now firmly rooted, and on the hills and valleys of wild Wales, and part of equally wild Scotland, where the ancient faith had been revived, the island was virtually pagan. To whom would the Holy Spirit entrust the blessed work of evangelising the Saxon and Engle conquerors? to the Celtic missionary from Ireland and Iona, or to the Italian monk trained at Rome?

The answer to this question was not given for nigh two centuries. The story of the conversion of these Engles and Saxons is indeed a marvellous one, and to us, their children, a story of surpassing interest. As the pages of the history are one by one slowly turned, we shall mark how the two churches toiled after the same high end—alas! never friends, for their ways of working lay far, far apart. The Celtic churchmen strove to lead the pagan Northmen to Christ and life with the weapons of a passionate earnestness and of a tender restless energy which, wielded by saintly men of the type of Aidan and Cuthbert, Columban and Gall, were simply

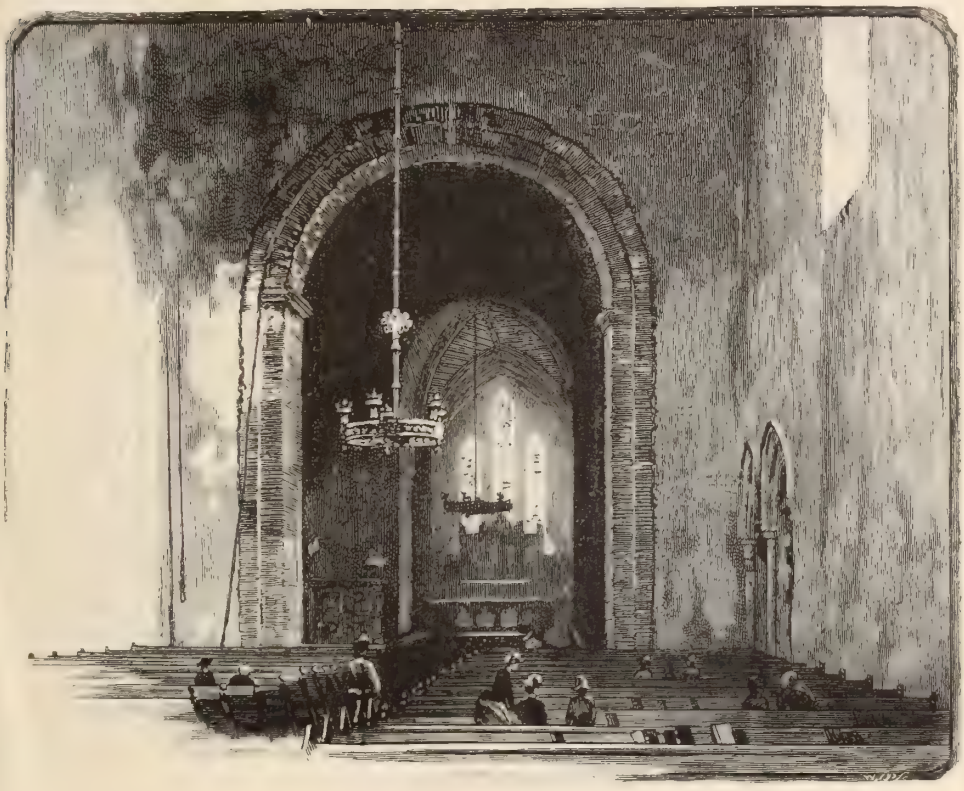
irresistible. The Roman churchmen, splendidly represented by Wilfrid and Bede, Theodore and Aldhelm, for the same high ends used arms forged in a different workshop. Their weapons were changeless law, perfect order, unswerving obedience, an iron discipline. These arms in a different way were equally successful. Before the two centuries whose story is next to be told had run their course, the great work was finished, and heathen Britain had become Christian England—the great barbaric island which Western Europe looked on with mingled wonder and admiration. The two rival communions—the Celtic and the Roman—may be fairly said to have contributed equally to bring about this great result, though the spoils of the blessed victory all remained with Rome. Men soon forget the vanquished; and only on that day when the Books are opened before the Throne, and all is revealed, will the true work of the forgotten Celtic church in the matter of the conversion of Britain be really known. Some of us even dare to think that, in the summing up on the day of the great Assize, the first—as men count first—will be found to be last, and the last first!

King Ethelbert of Kent died in the year 616, and was laid by the side of his queen in Augustine's monastic church outside the walls of Canterbury. Before the death of the old king, however, clouds seemed to be gathering over the fortunes of Christianity in Kent. The acknowledged supremacy of king Ethelbert over the neighbouring pagans was gradually passing away, and his influence—ever used in favour of the faith—in London and the Essex country was fast waning. Eadbald, his son and heir, was no Christian, and his life was irregular and his example evil; and when he came to the throne, many of the Jutish people of Kent threw off even the profession of Christianity.

In London things were even worse. King Sæberht, Ethelbert's nephew, who had loved the teaching of Mellitus, and had built, as we have seen, the St. Paul's and probably the West Minster, was also dead; and his three sons, who succeeded him as chiefs of the East Saxon people, cared nothing for the new doctrines, and worshipped the old gods of their fathers. One day they were watching bishop Mellitus administering, in one or other of the new churches of St. Paul's or the West Minster, the Communion to the faithful. The Saxon princes were angry because he passed them by. "Why," said they to the bishop, "do you not offer us the white bread which you used to give to our father, Sæberht, and which you still give to the people in your church?" The fearless servant of God replied to the princes: "If you will be washed in that laver of salvation in which your father was washed, you also may partake of the holy bread of which he partook; but if you despise the laver of life, you may not receive the Bread of Life." This they refused to do, but insisted upon partaking of the sacred oblation. Mellitus still resisted. Then the princes, enraged at what they considered his obstinacy, ordered Mellitus and his companions to quit the East Saxon country.

Justus and the church of Rochester were overwhelmed by the same storm. A wave of pagan reaction passed over all

the south-east of England. There was no home for the fugitives of London and Rochester in Canterbury. There, too, the new King Eadbald was hostile to Christianity. His manner of life made him hate the presence, and dread the Augustine, Ethelbert, and Bertha were laid. As he prayed, sleep came on him; and as he slept, in a dream he saw St. Peter standing by him, bitterly reproaching him for his cowardice in forsaking the flock of God entrusted to his charge; in



ST. MARY'S, DOVER CASTLE.

sad reproaches and earnest reminders of Laurence and the Canterbury monks. Friendless now, and in danger of their lives, Mellitus and Justus fled to the neighbouring coast of Gaul. Laurence also, persuaded that all was over for the Christian cause in Kent, prepared to follow them. The night before his flight he spent in the now completed church of St. Peter and Paul, where the remains of leaving them to the wolves, instead of braving death for their sake. Bede, who tells the story, adds that St. Peter scourged the faint-hearted archbishop with pitiless severity.

In the morning Laurence sought the pagan king Eadbald, telling him of his strange dream, and pointing to the scars and wounds inflicted by his ghostly visitant the night before. The king's heart

was touched, so runs the legend; he listened to his father's old instructor, and determined to become the friend, not the foe, of the men who had dwelt so long among his people, and who had taught them so many and such beautiful things. Eadbald became himself a devoted Christian, and, as far as Kent was concerned, the religion of the Crucified became more firmly rooted than ever. The Canterbury settlement was never seriously threatened again, and it continued its quiet, blessed work unhindered among the Jutish people. The two fugitive bishops, Mellitus and Justus, returned from Gaul; the influence of king Eadbald restored Justus to the church of Rochester, which still continued to be a centre of earnest work. But his power was insufficient to bring about any change in London and in the East Saxon territory. We must picture St. Paul's and the West Minster lying for years untenanted by priest or worshipper—possibly even profaned by the wild worship of Woden and the gods of the north.

There is little to record for many years in the story of the church of Canterbury. Laurence died three years after his dream, king Eadbald ever remaining his staunch friend. In succession his faithful friends followed him as archbishop—Mellitus first, then Justus; and in the year 627 the last of the old companions of Augustine, Honorius, took his place as the fifth of the archbishops of the see, hereafter to become so famous.

Thus nearly a quarter of a century had passed since Augustine had fallen asleep, and during that long period no further progress had been made by the Italian mission sent to Britain by Gregory the Great. Indeed, the area of its influence had been vastly reduced in this period. The Christian settlement in London, which seemed in the first years of the century to promise such happy results, had been swept away; to the north of the city the missionaries of the religion of Jesus had made no way. The East Saxon nation was still pagan. Even Rochester, under the influence of Christian Kent, scarcely tolerated a Christian church or mission; and on one occasion, as we have seen, the bishop and his companions were forced to fly for their lives. In Canterbury, owing to the influence of the king, who, however, began his reign as a pagan, bitterly hostile to the Christian church, the foundations of Augustine held their own, but they seemed to have made but little way in the hearts of the surrounding peoples. All efforts, too, at union with the remnant of the ancient British church in the west had signally failed, and no friendly relations of the Canterbury Roman mission with the flourishing church in Ireland had been established. Indeed, all attempts of Rome to convert the Northmen conquerors of Britain, which had been crowned during the first few years which followed the landing of Augustine in Kent with such splendid success, seemed doomed to failure. After some thirty years of work, only a little corner in the south-east of Britain had received Christianity, and even this solitary fortress of the faith was gravely menaced by the numerous hostile pagan influences which surrounded it.

The failure was acknowledged and sorrowfully commented on by Pope Boniface V., in a formal letter to Justus, bishop of Rochester, on the occasion of his transla-

tion to the arch-see of Canterbury on the death of Mellitus. The Roman pontiff sent the new archbishop the pall, and authorised him to consecrate single-handed a new bishop for Rochester. This letter of Boniface V. to Justus was written in A.D. 624, and specially alludes to the disappointment of the expectations which had been based upon the early successes of Augustine in Kent. The Pope, while dwelling on these baffled hopes, consoled the archbishop by telling him that what had been done was a pledge that in due time all would be done; that the slow progress was a trial of patience and endurance; the trial, said the wise Pope, should be borne in faith, and with a humble confidence that the work in Kent would secure in time the extension of Christianity among the neighbouring peoples. Such brave and loving words were indeed sorely needed by the little Christian colony in south-east Britain, for at the period when Boniface V. wrote to the new archbishop Justus the outlook was but a sombre one.

One or two events connected with these early days of Kentish Christianity are noteworthy. Among the works carried out when Eadbald was king, we have one still with us—that most venerable church of St. Mary, in the precincts of the Castle of Dover, attached to the old Roman Lighthouse Tower, built of lava and pumice-stone, the ballast of some Italian ship trading to Dover in the second or third century. At Folkestone Eadbald's daughter Eanswith founded a religious society, probably close to the site now occupied by the well-known and beautiful parish church. The name of the Jutish princess is still held in grateful memory at Folkestone as the local saint.

But more important far to the records of the royal house of Ethelbert was a marriage which took place about the year 625, only a few months after the receipt by archbishop Justus of Boniface's letter accompanying his pall. Edwin, the English king of Northumbria, asked for the hand in marriage of Ethelburga, king Eadbald's sister, the daughter of Ethelbert and Bertha. Ethelburga was known in her family as Tatta — "the darling." Edwin, of whom more presently, was rapidly advancing to that position of fame and power among the conquerors which he subsequently reached; but the once pagan Eadbald, now devoted to the faith, absolutely refused to give his sister to a heathen. Edwin repeated his petition, promising that if Ethelburga married him, she and her attendants should retain full liberty to worship according to the tenets of their faith. The Northumbrian's prayer was granted, and the daughter of Ethelbert left for her northern home accompanied by Paulinus, one of the three who had been sent from Rome with Justus in the year 601, to strengthen the original company of Augustine. Before Paulinus left with Ethelburga, he was consecrated by Justus to the episcopate.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STRUGGLE OF CHRISTIANITY IN NORTHERN, MIDLAND, AND EASTERN ENGLAND.

German Origin of the Northern Invaders—Jutes, Engles, and Saxons—Preponderance of the Engles—Ælla of Deira—Ethelfrid the Ravager banishes Ælla's Son Edwin—Edwin at the Court of Redwald in East Anglia—Paulinus the Bishop—Defeat and Death of Ethelfrid and Restoration of Edwin—Extent of his Power—Marriage with Ethelburga—His Conversion by Paulinus—Council of Edwin's Thanes at Godmundham—Recognition of Christianity—Its Limited Extension—Paulinus and his Career—The Pagan Champion Penda of Mercia—His Alliance with Cadwallon—Defeat and Death of Edwin, and Departure of Paulinus and the Widowed Queen.

THE central scene of the story of the rise of Christianity among the North-folk who had conquered Britain, will now be removed from Kent to the northern district of the island. But it will make the story more vivid and lifelike if something of an outline be drawn of the general position of the North-folk in Britain at the beginning of the seventh century.

It is curious to mark how differently eminent writers view an event or a series of events in history. One dwells upon a battle, a siege, a royal marriage, as the turning-point in a nation's history. Another passes these by, as trivial events scarcely deserving the baldest mention. The importance or insignificance of an event depends upon the stand-point occupied by the chronicler. In the eyes of Milton the history of the Saxon princes is nothing more than "the scuffling of kites and crows." Cardinal Newman, on the other hand, proudly points to "the sixty saints and the hundred confessors who were trained in royal palaces of Saxon kings for the Kalendar of the Blessed." "How vast a chasm," writes a third and no less distinguished author, "yawns between these two conceptions of the same era!" To us, without indulging in the fervid and exaggerated estimate of Newman, the age is one of surpassing interest. It is the period to which the making of our English Christianity belongs.

In the last half of the fifth century, when the flood of barbarians broke in upon the various provinces of the Roman empire, Britain was invaded and overrun and finally conquered by successive bands of warriors, mainly drawn from a Low-German branch of the great Teutonic family who dwelt in the north of Germany, and in that peninsula we now call Sleswick, which separates the Baltic from the northern seas. Their country, roughly speaking, was that broad district on the banks of the Elbe, the Ems, and the Rhine (eastern bank). These German tribes, who chose Britain for the scene of their venture, are known as the Jutes, the Engles or Angles, and the Saxons. They were loosely knit together by the ties of a common blood, common speech, common social and political institutions, and a common religion.

The old home of the *Jutes*, who arrived first on our shores about A.D. 449, was that peninsula still called after them *Jutland*, which runs from the shores of North

Germany into the Baltic and North Seas. They were near kinsmen of the race settled on the opposite Scandinavian coast and the Danish Isles. Their settlement and their early history in Kent have been briefly described. Kent, part of Surrey, and subsequently the Isle of Wight, represented which lay between the Elbe and the Ems, and across the Ems as far as the east bank of the Rhine. They were a number of kindred tribes drawn together into one great people known under the general name of Saxon. In our island they were classed under two great divisions—the East

DEPARTURE OF ENGLE INVADERS FOR BRITAIN.

the whole of their conquests in Britain. Their period of supremacy was short, and coincided with the reign of that Ethelbert who welcomed Augustine. After his death the Jutes exercised comparatively little influence in the island outside their own kingdom of Kent, which was eventually absorbed into the territory acquired by the larger and more powerful kindred tribe known as the West Saxons.

The *Saxons* came from the wide district Saxons and West Saxons. The East Saxons overran Middlesex, part of Surrey, and Essex. Their influence in Britain was never predominant, and they were before long absorbed by, or at least subject to the over-lordship of, their near kinsmen, the West Saxons, or of the powerful and more numerous Engles. The West Saxons, continually reinforced by fresh bands of their countrymen, during a long period of years kept slowly advancing and gradually con-

quering the whole of the south of Britain, from the borders of Jutish Kent as far as Devonshire. Their kingdom eventually was roughly co-extensive with Sussex, Hampshire, Berkshire, Wilts, Dorset, Gloucester, Worcester, Warwick, and Shropshire. Later the over-lordship of

MAP SHOWING THE ORIGIN OF SAXONS, ENGLES, AND JUTES.

their western and some of their midland districts passed into the hands—at least for a season—of the Engles. Their supremacy in the island, and indeed the influence to which they were entitled by their great numbers and the wide extent of their conquests, was for a very long time delayed by internal disputes and by wranglings among their own tribal chieftains.

The third of the great divisions of the North-folk who conquered and settled in Britain were the *Engles* or *Angles*. Their home originally was on the middle Elbe, in the country which lies around the comparatively modern city of Magdeburg. Some of these Engles—those probably with whom Britain had most to do—dwelt in the lower part of the peninsula between the Baltic and North Sea immediately to the south of Jutland, and in the part of North Germany now known as Lower Hanover and Oldenburg. The whole of these northern Engles seem to have practically deserted their old home for the pleasanter and more fertile plains and valleys of Britain. In this they differed from their Jutish and Saxon kinsmen many of whom remained in their country. Some 200 years after their first landing in Britain, the district whence the northern Engles came, was still desolate and bare of

inhabitants. This wholesale migration of an entire people accounts for the vast numbers of the Engles,* who in the course of successive arrivals spread over so large a portion of our island. They conquered and eventually settled in Norfolk, Suffolk, Lincoln, Yorkshire, Durham, Northumberland, and the Midland districts of Britain. In the Midlands they were generally known as Mercians, or Men of the Marches, because they occupied the long line of country bordering on the mountains of the west, where the remnant of the conquered Britons had found a refuge. Those of them who settled in the north and east were called Bernicians and Deirans, from the sections they inhabited in the vast district of Northumbria. It is these Engles, who for 200 years after the first coming of the North-folk exercised, as we shall see, a general supremacy among the conquering tribes. It is they who have given to the whole island their name—now honoured or feared by the whole world—of ENGLAND.

The story of the conversion of England is closely bound up with the fortunes of the Engles in Northumbria; and it will be seen that what the Roman mission of Augustine in Kent had failed to accomplish, was eventually carried out by men who lived under the shadow of that great throne which was set up in Yorkshire and Northumberland by the ruling Engle dynasty.

We first hear of these Engles in North Britain in the year 547, when a number of invading bands belonging to these people agreed together to choose for their king one of their chieftains, Ida, known among the harassed Britons by the ominous name of "Flame-Bearer." Ida's conquests in North Britain were known as Bernicia. Bernicia stretched over a wide extent of country, reaching from the Forth to the Tees. The original British dwellers in these parts were driven to the fastnesses of Cumberland and Westmorland, where they long maintained themselves. Ida, like the other kingly Engle and Saxon chieftains, claimed to descend direct from the god Woden; nine generations only were said to have lived between the Engle Flame-Bearer and his divine ancestor.

Eleven years later than Ida the Flame-Bearer, the history of the southern Engles of Deira begins, in the person of Ælla, another child of the divine Woden race. Deira, which was occupied by the men of Ælla, lay immediately to the south of Ida's Bernicia, and included well-nigh the whole of Yorkshire, and much of Lancashire and Cheshire. It was this Ælla of Deira of whom Gregory the Great heard in the slave market of Rome, when he looked with pity on the fair-haired Engle boys, and made that curious string of puns on the words: Ælla, Deira, and Angles (Engles).

South, again, of the Engle kingdom of Deira, more hordes of these Engles, under other chieftains, overran all the central parts of Britain. As time went on, these Midland Engles grouped themselves together, and, under the name of Mercians, established a powerful kingdom, which stretched over the centre of Britain, reaching from the territories of the Engles in Deira, or Yorkshire, to the settlements of the West Saxons in the southern parts of the island. But for the present our

* It seems convenient henceforth to adopt this form of the word.

interest is mainly centred upon the northern Engles of Bernicia and Deira.

We know few details of the terrible conquest of this part of Britain. Fragments of burned cities here and there remain to tell the awful story. As in the south of the island in the case of the Saxons, so in the north and Midlands, the Engles spared none. The cities were sacked and destroyed; the inhabitants of city and country were well-nigh all slain, or driven out as homeless exiles. Then followed a period of quarrelling and

Ethelfrid, who succeeded to the lordship of this great territory (A.D. 593), married the daughter of Ælla, and thus was the brother-in-law of the exiled Edwin. He was a typical heathen Engle king. Bede tells us how he "wasted the race of the Britons more than any chieftain of the Engles had done; for none drove out or subdued so many of the natives, or won so much of their lands for Engle settlement." Merciless in his behaviour to his own kith and kin, merciless

EARLY ENGLISH WRITING (*from a MS.*).

desperate fighting among the conquerors, "the scuffling of kites and crows" we have spoken of. King Ethelfrid of Bernicia (A.D. 592), known even among his wild and savage countrymen as "the Ravager," stands out with some prominence in that iron age of ceaseless, cruel warfare. His father Ethelric had, on the death of Ælla, taken forcible possession of Deira, and had driven away his son Edwin into exile; and Ethelfrid the Ravager had succeeded to the lordship of all the broad lands north of the Humber—North-humber-land. We shall hear much of this exiled prince Edwin; he plays a great part later in the story of the spread of Christianity among the Engle peoples.

to the conquered Britons, he nevertheless raised his country to great honour, and may be said to have been the founder of the greatness of Northumbria.

It was this great pagan warrior who, in the course of his never-ending wars, besieged the famous city of Deira—now Chester. The dwellers in Chester, armed with the courage of despair, risked a battle with the conquering Engles. Just before the engagement began, king Ethelfrid saw standing at a distance a great company of monks from ths neighbouring monastery of Bangor Iscoed, who, after a three days' fast, had come out of their sacred home to pray for the safety of the famous British city. Bangor Iscoed was one of those vast Celtic

monastic establishments of which we have already spoken. It contained 2,000 monks; of these one-half came out to pray for the success of their fellow-countrymen. monks and priests. "If," said the stern Engle, "they are crying to their god against us, then they are fighting with us by curses, though not with arms." Then

"ETHELFRID WATCHED THE WILD GESTURES OF THE UNARMED MONKS."

Ethelfrid, watching the wild gestures and listening to the piteous cries of the unarmed, strangely-clad monks, as they prayed their prayers and sang their hymns with impassioned earnestness, asked who and what this curious company were. He was told they were only unarmed Christian he bade his warriors fall at once upon them; of the 1,000 monks of Bangor only fifty escaped the bloody slaughter which followed. The monastery, with all its literary and priceless treasures, was burned and sacked, and the hapless dwellers in it were hunted down; probably few escaped

to tell the awful story of the fate of their famous prayer-home. Chester, too, the fair city known as the proud northern "City of the Legions," fell before the conquering Engle, and was sacked and utterly destroyed.

The pagan king, in the midst of his career of conquest, dreaded his exiled brother-in-law Edwin—alluded to above—and determined to compass his death. Edwin had found a shelter and a home far away from his native Deira, in East Anglia, at the court of Redwald, the friend of Ethelbert, the Christian king of Kent. Redwald was half a Christian, half a pagan: Ethelbert had persuaded him to be baptised, but his people in the eastern counties still loved their old gods; so Redwald contented himself with placing an altar to Christ by the side of the altar of Woden. At the court of Redwald at that time dwelt Paulinus, the Roman missionary, Augustine's companion; it was for him a hopeless mission though, in that land so devoted to the gods of the North. The work there had to be done by another than Paulinus, who seems to have been generally unknown and unnoticed in that heathen county. A strange chance happened, however, which gave him an influence over the exiled Edwin, which afterwards he used with wonderful success.

The sleepless jealousy of Ethelfrid the Ravager pursued Edwin in his distant place of exile. Thrice did the powerful Northumbrian king send to Redwald, offering great sums of money for the life of his brother-in-law. Each time he increased the offers; and the bribes went accompanied with threats of vengeance, of war and invasion, if his wishes were not complied with. At length the East Anglian king was gained over, probably terrified by the threats of the powerful and unscrupulous Engle king. Redwald's purpose to slay or to give up the exile came to the ears of a trusted friend of Edwin's, who one night called his friend from his chamber, and, leading him out of the palace, told him of the plot against his life or his liberty, and offered to guide him to a hiding-place where he would be safe. Edwin refused to fly, replying he was the friend of Redwald, a great king, and if he must needs die, he would rather die by his hand than by the hands of some unknown person. "For," he added, "where should I be safe? I have been so long now a fugitive. My enemies are everywhere." His friend left him. It was night and very dark, and the unhappy prince sat down on a stone bench outside the palace, and sorrowfully thought over his hard fate: utterly friendless and forlorn, surrounded by ruthless enemies, his misfortunes were greater than he could bear. While musing thus, a stranger came to him and courteously asked why he was sitting there alone in the darkness, when all others were sleeping. Edwin wonderingly asked him, why he troubled himself about him. The stranger replied, "I am acquainted with you, and your fears and bitter sorrows are all known to me. Now tell me what reward you will give the man who will persuade Redwald to be your faithful friend, and not your betrayer." Edwin replied that he would indeed bestow on such a man all it was in his power to give. The unknown stranger went on, "What if I ventured to tell you of a splendid future lying before you, of

your enemies being defeated, of yourself restored to a power greater than any ever possessed by your kingly ancestors? Will you promise in days to come, if these things come true, implicitly to follow my counsel and advice in the gravest matters which affect your life and salvation?" Edwin promised, and the unknown then laid his hand upon his head, saying to him, "Remember your solemn undertaking, when this sign shall be given to you," and with these words he disappeared in the darkness.

That night prince Edwin learnt that the queen had induced Redwald to give up all idea of harming him, persuading her husband that it was unworthy of a king to sell his friend for gold, or to sacrifice him for fear of a powerful neighbour. The East Anglian sovereign more than kept his word. He did not wait for Ethelfrid to accomplish his threat, but marched with a strong force to meet him. The two Engle kings—Redwald and Ethelfrid, and their hosts—met in the Trent Valley, and the battle was fought on the banks of the Idle. The Northumbrians were taken by surprise; the East Anglian was completely victorious, and Ethelfrid was slain. A line of an old Northern song preserves the memory of that fatal encounter, which had so marked an influence on the Christian story of England—"Foul ran Idle with the blood of Englishmen." The immediate result of the battle of the Idle was the elevation of Edwin to the Northumbrian throne. The sons of the slain Ethelfrid in their turn were driven from their country by their uncle Edwin; but three of them—Eanfred, Oswald, and Oswiu—in after days became kings of the country which now drove them out with ignominy, and the two last named, Oswald and Oswiu—names now utterly forgotten by most men—in their days were reckoned among the noblest and greatest sovereigns of their age.

The history of Edwin's reign is eventful and picturesque. His high descent and his close connection with the house of Ethelfrid caused him to be accepted without any opposition by all the northern Engles. The misfortunes of his earlier years had given a tinge of sadness and sympathy to his character, which, while it diminished nothing of the dash and energy possessed by his predecessor, Ethelfrid the Ravager, softened the cruelty and vindictiveness of this early Engle chieftain; though he continued the war with the remnant of the British, driving them from their last stronghold in Deira (Yorkshire). His kingdom grew in extent and power; it reached from the Forth to the Solent; and tradition ascribes to him the building of the great Scottish capital of Edinburgh (Edwin's Burg). The city of York became his chief residence, and something of the ancient glories of a Roman emperor belonged to the great Engle chieftain as he passed through his broad dominions. Men say how a great standard of gold and purple floated before him, while a feather tuft attached to a spear was the ensign of his lordship over the greater part of Britain. Gradually under his rule the din and confusion and terror of the ceaseless wars of conquest seemed to be stilled, and over most of the war-weary, harassed island, with what Bede terms "the empire of the English and the Roman majesty," came back for

a season something of the hush of the long-lost Roman peace.

Then came the beautiful episode of the great pagan king's marriage with the beloved Christian princess of Kent, the daughter of Ethelbert, the dead Augustine's friend — Ethelburga — whose pet name of Tatta (the darling) seems to tell us something of the quiet influence she

EDWIN'S SUPREMACY.

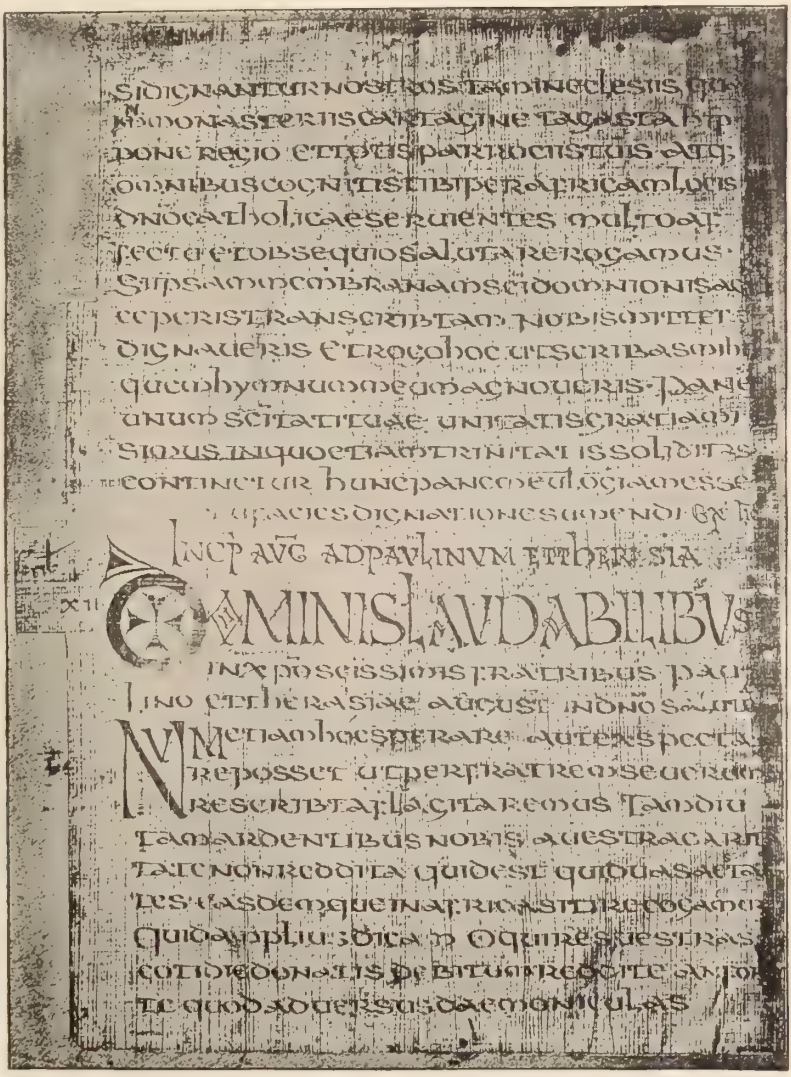
exercised at her brother's Kentish court. There was the usual demur at the union of a Christian girl with a pagan warrior; the same difficulty presented itself in the case of the daughter, as it had some years before in the case of the mother, when the heathen king Ethelbert wooed Bertha, the Christian Frankish princess. The difficulty was then got over by the permission to bring a Christian priest from Paris to Canterbury, the queen's new home. So now, as we have seen, it was arranged that Paulinus, of whom we have heard already as sent by Gregory to join Augustine—the same Paulinus whom we met with in East Anglia at the court of Redwald—should form part of Ethelburga's suite in her new home at York.

The marriage of Edwin and Ethelburga was a happy one, but an untoward event soon threatened to bring that happiness to an end. Jealousy on the part of a West-Saxon king who bore the barbarous-sounding name of Cwichelm, stirred up by the sight of the ever-growing power of the Engle sovereign, prompted an attempt upon the life of Edwin. A trusty and determined messenger of Cwichelm brought a message from his master to Edwin on the Easter day of the year 626. While speaking to the king he drew out a poisoned dagger, and tried to stab the listening Edwin. A devoted servant (whose name, Lilla, has been preserved) threw himself between his master and the would-be assassin, and received the deadly thrust in his stead; but so violent was the blow that the point of the dagger reached Edwin through the pierced body of his faithful follower. The king's wound was, however, slight, and he soon recovered. That night Ethelburga's daughter Eanfleda was born. In grateful memory of his escape, and for the love of Ethelburga, the Engle sovereign resolved to renounce his idols and the worship of the old Northern gods, and gave the newborn princess Eanfleda to Paulinus that he might, according to the further custom which had already engrafted itself upon the monastic system, and in later ages not unfrequently produced unhappy results, consecrate her to Christ. This Eanfleda

afterwards became a power in Christian Northumbria.

Paulinus now became an intimate associate of the king, who talked much with him about Jesus and the Christian faith; but though he had renounced the old pagan worship of the Northern people, he hesitated long before becoming a Christian.

One day, as he was alone and thinking over the story of Christianity, its many wondrous promises and blessed teaching, Paulinus came to him and quietly laid his



PAGE FROM A COPY (VI. OR VII. CENT.) OF AUGUSTINE'S WRITINGS, CONTAINING PORTION OF A LETTER TO PAULINUS (*Paris Bibl. Nat.*).

hand upon the king's head, asking him if he remembered the sign, and prayed him to embrace the faith of Jesus. Then Edwin called to mind the memorable evening when he sat in the chill darkness, on the stone bench outside Redwald's royal hall in East Anglia, all alone and sorrowful, waiting for death; and how an unknown stranger had come to him as he sat and thought, and foretold his future greatness; and had given him this solemn sign. He recognised at once by the ever-remembered sign that the unknown stranger of that dark night outside Redwald's hall was the same Paulinus. He called to mind also the promise made in his hour of sorrow and perplexity, and flinging himself at Paulinus' feet, said he would indeed become a Christian.

The Engle king at once summoned a great council of his chiefs to his royal home at Godmundham, near Market Weighton, some twenty-three miles from York, and asked them for their opinion of the worship of Christ. It was a memorable meeting, this assembly of the chiefs of the great Engle race, when the solemn question was put to them—should they renounce the old gods of the North, the gods of their fathers, the gods of war and revelry, for the gentle faith professed by the people whom they had driven out of the land?

Curiously enough, the most eloquent advocate of Christianity was Coifi, the chief priest of the gods of the North! The priest related his own experiences. No one of the Engle people, he said, had served these supposed gods more zealously than he, Coifi, had done in his past life; but to little purpose, for they had done nothing for him who had served them so long and faithfully. It were surely better, if the new doctrines were found to be of a more practical nature, to adopt them without delay. The old faith, as far as Coifi had had experience of it, was a useless religion.

Another chieftain used a different and a nobler line of argument. The faith of their fathers gave them no information as to the mysterious past of men, and threw no light on the still more mysterious and hidden future. His words were strangely beautiful and eloquent, and the striking simile he used has come down the long stream of ages to us. This wise thane* likened the life of man to the flight of a storm-driven bird through one of those halls where the tired warriors, war-worn and hungry, used to meet in the hours of the long winter evenings to rest

* In A. S. spelt *thegn*, but the modern form, consecrated by Shakespeare and Scott, probably gives the pronunciation. The original meaning of the word "Thegn" was a warlike man, and testifies distinctly to the origin of the rank in military service. But it was used also of a freeman who had acquired a certain considerable estate in law, who then became Thegn-worthy. The name of Thegn covers the whole class which after the Conquest appears under the name of knights, with the same qualification in law, and nearly the same obligations. It also carried so much of nobility as is implied in hereditary privilege—for instance, men might be called Thegns even when they held no land; but they did not acquire the privilege by descent until they had reached a third generation from the founder of the family dignity. Under the name of Thegn were also included various grades of dignity. The highest, the class of king's Thegns, were his body-guard, his nearest and most constant counsellors. A post among them was soon coveted and won by the greatest and noblest. Thegnhood contained within itself the germ of feudalism as known among the Normans. Compare *Stubbs*, "Constitutional History," chap. vi.; and *Green*, "Making of England," chap. iv.

and carouse. The speaker depicted the warm, fire-lit chamber, and contrasted the comfort of the hearth-fire round which the guests were gathered, with the cold wind and icy rain-storm without. Suddenly he described the coming in of a bird attracted by the light and warmth within ; the bird, he said, flew through the door, and, tarrying a few pleasant moments in the shelter of the fire-lit hall, went forth again and was lost in the darkness of the cold night without. "Such," said the Engle thane, "appears to me to be the life of man : we see it just for a moment, for a moment it enjoys light and warmth ; but of all that goes before that moment, and also of all that follows after, we know absolutely nothing. If the new faith can teach us anything which will throw light upon that dread secret of the unknown past and of the hidden future, surely we should be wise men to adopt it."

"But if this pale Paulinus
Have somewhat more to tell,
Some news of whence and whither
And where the soul may dwell,
If in that outer darkness
The sun of hope may shine,
He makes life worth the living,
I take his God for mine." *

Coifi then suggested that Paulinus, well known in the court of Edwin as the queen's friend and adviser, should tell them about his religion and his God. The Roman monk complied with the suggestion, and appears to have spoken well and wisely, for Coifi, the pagan high priest, rose after him and boldly spoke his opinion. "For a long time," he said, "I have been convinced of the hollowness of all that we have been worshipping ; the deeper I searched for truth in it the less I found in it. Now I see truth shining out clear in the new teaching. Come, let us at once destroy these useless temples and altars and burn them." Then, calling for a horse and arms, which it was not lawful for a priest to bear, he rode straight to the door of the temple hard by the hall of assembly at Godmundham, and hurled his spear right into the idol-house, and bade his companions fire it. The result of this scene was the general adoption of Christianity by the Engle king and his counsellors.

This happened early in the year 627. But this royal recognition of the "faith" was a very different thing among the German Engles, from what we read of among the Celtic peoples of Ireland. There, when the king and his chieftains became Christians, their example was largely, if not universally, followed by the people. In Northumbria it was widely different. No general conversion followed Edwin's baptism ; no large body of monks and missionaries ever seems to have gathered round Paulinus ; no building of churches, no erection of a group of monastic huts, sheltering their crowds of devotees, is related in any of the Northumbrian stories. At the bidding of Edwin a little wooden church arose in York ; and when Paulinus was formally established as bishop in that city of many august memories, the king began a large church in stone, square in form, around the little primitive sanctuary of wood where the Roman monk baptised him. The stone church, the ancient York Cathedral, long enclosed as a sacred relic the first little oratory of wood where Paulinus ministered.

* Palgrave's "Vision of England."

Save this poor oratory of York, however, no church arose in Edwin's days between the Forth and Tees. In spite of later eulogies on the work of Paulinus, the historian is compelled to conclude that the earnest Italian made but little way among the Engle subjects of Edwin — and yet he was indefatigable. During the six years which followed Edwin's baptism we hear of his constant journeyings from north to south, across desolate moorlands, through inhospitable wolds—preaching, praying, teaching. Here and there we find dim traces of his noble toil and restless labours. We hear of him even as far south as Nottinghamshire. In Leicestershire, tradition ascribes to him and his converts the building on the hill of Lincoln, the humble predecessor of that proud Minster, now one of the glories of England; and in that first little church of Lincoln Paulinus is said to have consecrated Honorius, fourth successor of Augustine in the archbishopric of Canterbury. When Pope Honorius sent the pall to his namesake, the fifth archbishop of Canterbury, he also sent the same vestment, distinctive of the highest rank in the hierarchy, to Paulinus, thus signifying his wish that York should be the seat of a northern arch-see. But the pall arrived from Rome too late for Paulinus; he had left York and Northumbria for ever before it arrived.

These six years were the great years of one of the most striking personages of this eventful age. There is much in Paulinus to admire, something to deplore, and not a little that puzzles his biographer. Strange to say, we hear of no companions of his labour save one, the Deacon James, who laboured on, long after Paulinus had left the scene of his six years' well-nigh fruitless toil. Why was he so solitary? Why always alone? Sent originally to Kent to be a helper and counsellor of Augustine, we fail to hear of him as one of the faithful band who were loved and trusted by the first archbishop of the English. Laurence was ever at Augustine's side in life and in death. Justus and Mellitus were his trusted and loved suffragans, then his successors. Where was Paulinus? Evidently never one of the familiar inner circle. We catch sight of him, a dim and misty personality, at Redwald's court in East Anglia, where Edwin lived then as a hunted exile. Then he reappears at Canterbury, and is sent away again to the far north as the confessor-bishop of the Princess Ethelburga, when she became Edwin's queen in Northumbria. Then for two or three years we almost lose sight of him, till he reappears as the confidential friend of king Edwin in 627, and is the principal figure in the famous assembly at Godmundham, where Edwin and his thanes and idol-priest accepted Christianity. Then for six years he plays the part of the unwearied missionary preacher and teacher in the northern districts. But he rallied to his side no friends, no associates; alone, or well-nigh alone, he preaches, baptises, toils early and late, organising nothing, arranging nothing; and when the great catastrophe overwhelms Edwin in Northumbria, he hurriedly flees the scene of his restless life, and quietly settles down at Rochester.

Verily a strange, inexplicable man; yet he impressed all who came in contact with him with a sense of power, earnestness, and even enthusiasm. Bede, who must

have known many of his contemporaries, admires him with an ungrudging admiration, and even gives us a vivid picture of his personal appearance, which was well remembered in Northumbria long after he bones have now rested for more than twelve hundred years far away from his beloved Northumbria, in the precincts of the home of his later years—the cathedral church of St. Andrew, Rochester.

DEATH OF EDWIN AT HATFIELD.

passed away. All men who had received baptism at his hands recalled with reverent and loving tenderness the venerable and awe-inspiring teacher, with his lofty and stooping form, his black hair, his aquiline nose, his emaciated but winning face. His

The six years of Paulinus' work and of his influence with Edwin stirred up, however, another spirit. Edwin, who had hesitated for years before he renounced the gods of the north, after the Godmundham assembly of 627, adopted the religion of

Christ with real earnestness; so, as we have seen, outwardly at least, did many of his thanes and chieftains. But the bulk of his Engle subjects remained attached to the old altars of Woden and Thor. The only Christians were those—comparatively few in number—who were moved by the personal enthusiasm of Paulinus and his rare associates. A spirit of enthusiasm for the old Norsemen's faith, a determined opposition to the new religion of the king, was excited among the Engle peoples who extended over the north and east and midlands of Britain, and who after all, save in Northumbria, were only knit to the Northumbrian king by comparatively slender ties.

The Middle Engles, or Mercians, as they were termed, were at this juncture ruled over by a chieftain of rare ability and power, who was only too ready to repudiate the over-lordship of Edwin, the Northumbrian Engle. This mighty chieftain, or king as he styled himself, ruled over the various Middle Engle peoples. His name—Penda—has come down to us as the name of the great champion of the old heathen religion of the Northmen. For thirty years this Penda held Christianity in check in the island, and his acknowledged abilities and success for a long period rendered it doubtful whether Christ or Woden would be eventually acknowledged as the god of the English peoples. Unscrupulous, cruel, and vindictive, yet withal possessing all the qualities of a born leader of men, Penda was at once an able general and a consummate statesman—one, too, who possessed the powerful secret of attracting great masses of men to himself.

The ancient British race also, although utterly defeated and driven out of their original homes, still existed in the western district of Britain in considerable numbers, and were knit together by a burning hatred of their conquerors. Penda, the Engle Mercian, took advantage of this unextinguishable hate. He allied himself with their most powerful and able chief—the king Cadwallon—and with him determined to compass the fate of king Edwin. The strange and unnatural union between the British Christian king Cadwallon and the Mercian heathen Penda was too powerful a combination for Edwin successfully to cope with. In a bloody battle fought at Hatfield, in south-east Yorkshire, in the year 633, the whole army of Edwin was destroyed or dispersed, and the king himself was slain. Northumbria was harried by the victorious confederates, and suffered terribly from the invasion which followed the rout of Hatfield. The fierce cruelty of Cadwallon was especially remembered in after years. With him and his Britons it was a war of vengeance. "He spared," said a later chronicler, "neither women nor children, raging for a long time through the country, resolving that he should be the man to exterminate the whole Engle race within the bounds of Britain." "To this day," writes Bede, "that year is looked upon as unhappy and hateful to all good men."

What now became of the newly planted Christianity in hapless Northumbria? The work of Paulinus, great and earnest though it was, seems to have been superficial. With the death of Edwin and so many of his thanes, Christianity virtually disappeared. Paulinus saw the head of his friend and patron brought to York, where

it was buried in the unfinished church of St. Peter : the headless body of the king was recovered, and afterwards interred at Whitby. The Roman missionary's courage failed. Considering the cause of Christianity in Northumbria lost, he escaped to the sea-coast with the widowed queen Ethelburga and her son and daughter, took ship, and arrived safely in Kent. He carried with him a golden cross and chalice. The golden chalice was long shown in the church of Canterbury.

This was the melancholy end of Paulinus' active career. In Kent he accepted from Honorius the archbishop the bishopric of Rochester, where, as we have seen, he quietly ended his days. Ethelburga, the widowed queen, founded a convent at Lyminge, on the high ground, seven miles from Folkestone, on the Canterbury road. The antiquary's patient search in Lyminge has discovered in late years considerable remains of Ethelburga's church and monastery, and a modern tablet built in the wall of the ancient church reminds the passing stranger that the remains of Ethelbert's daughter and Edwin's widowed queen rest beneath his feet. A neighbouring common is still called "Tatta's Leas," thus preserving, after all these many hundred years (twelve centuries), the memory of "the darling," the petted and beloved princess of the court of Ethelbert and Bertha ; the queen of Edwin the first Christian Engle, who for many years was supreme ruler of almost all Britain; the widow who fled well-nigh friendless from the scene of her power and splendour; the quiet, sad-eyed abbess of the holy house in the hills above Folkestone.

Photo : Chester Vaughan, Acton, W.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMING OF AIDAN.

Oswald the Saint-King of Northumbria—His Training at Iona—Victory over the Britons and Death of Cadwallon — His Power and Influence — His Part in the Evangelisation of England — Failure of the Roman Mission Contrasted with Oswald's Success—His Application to Iona—Failure of Corman and Mission of Aidan—Lindisfarne or Holy Isle—Success of the Celtic Missionaries—Anecdotes of Aidan—His Teaching—Its Enduring Results tested by adversity—His Death—Legends connected with it, and Traditional Effect upon St. Cuthbert—Missionary Power of the Celtic Church—Its Probable Causes.

IN the melancholy year A.D. 633–634, which followed the catastrophe of Hatfield and the death of Edwin, Eanfrid, the son of Ethelfrid the Ravager, who was slain at the battle of the river Idle, and Osric, a nephew of Ælla, both near kinsmen of Edwin, were chosen by the Engle thanes as joint kings of Northumbria. Eanfrid and Osric during their short reign were pagans, and determined enemies of Christianity, which apparently had vanished altogether from the kingdom of the dead Edwin. Cadwallon, the British king, flushed with his victory at Hatfield, had made himself master of York, and threatened the very existence of the Engle dominion in the north. Within the year both the Engle heathen princes perished : Eanfrid fell in battle, and Osric was assassinated by Cadwallon's orders. But the ill-fortune which had all along pursued the British through the long weary wars with the invaders, soon put an end to the short-lived triumph of Cadwallon.

A younger brother of Eanfrid, Oswald, another of the sons of Ethelfrid the Ravager, succeeded to the throne of the dismayed and disorganised Engles of Northumbria, and proved a worthy successor of his kinsman Edwin. In after days, it was this Oswald who was honoured throughout the Christian England he helped to make, as Saint Oswald. He was a Christian in the true sense. He believed in Christ with all the passionate fervour of one long trained by devoted and earnest teachers of the faith. During the years of exile which followed the defeat and death of his father Ethelfrid, he had been sheltered in that truest home of Celtic Christianity, the monastery of Iona, off the west Scottish coast. The story of that strange community of devoted Irish saints has been already told. The spirit of its great and beloved founder, long after his death, brooded over the holy house of Iona, and a succession of saintly abbots and devoted monks carried on the work of Columba. Simple, self-denying scholars, they lived their prayer-filled lives in their rough wattled huts on that dreary, sea-washed island, imitating as far as they knew the austere but beautiful example of their founder. Some played the part of tireless missionaries ; some just tilled the poor Scottish soil around them ; some fished in the stormy Atlantic waters ; more worked as patient scholars ; but all were men of prayer. In the world though not of the

OSWALD ERECTING THE CROSS (*p.* 130).

world, in spite of their errors and mistaken ideal of life, they were, in their utter self-renunciation, amongst the closest followers of the Son of Man whom the world has ever seen. Here, among these men, tender and true, all ardent and devoted servants of Christ, Oswald, the homeless and landless Engle prince, received his first impressions of Christianity. He, like so many of his noble race, was a patriot in the word's highest sense. He loved his Engle people —may we not for a moment use the word which soon came into common use?—his *English* people—with a deep love, and believed in their great destiny; but the Engles of whose splendid future he loved to dream, must be Christian Engles. Their God must be a nobler Being than the Woden from whom he sprang—the Woden whose armour was dyed with blood. The Engle of the future must worship the white sinless Christ.

From Iona the young Oswald was summoned by the pagan thanes, when his brother, Eanfrid, fell before Cadwallon and the Briton's conquering army. It was but a poor and desolate Northumbria that Oswald was called to rule over, but he quietly gathered round him a small but gallant band of Engles. He was a born leader of men, and he inspired his little army with his own high courage and splendid daring. His Engle warriors were all pagans, save a little knot of Christian friends who had followed him from Iona. With these he took the field at once against the British force under the dreaded Cadwallon—a force far more numerous than his own.

It was near Hexham, in the year 635, that the Briton and the Engle met. The night before the battle king Oswald dreamed a strange dream; he thought he saw the tall form of the beloved founder of Iona—the Columba of whom he had heard so much while he lived with the Iona monks—covering with his mantle well-nigh the whole Engle camp; and, as he gazed, he thought he heard Columba's voice, bidding him "be strong and play the man to-day, for I am with thee." In the deep dark dawn of the early morning Oswald framed a rough-hewn wooden cross, which he and his faithful few fixed firmly in the ground; and then he prayed, the wondering Engles round him kneeling —prayed a fervid, passionate Iona prayer to the one true and living God, to help him and his in this their supreme moment of need. With the prayer still trembling on his lips, he charged with his Engles, home. No doubt the Briton's host, following their sad invariable custom, had spent the night in wild carousing. "Pale mead had been their drink," as their own patriot bard, with bitter scorn, had often sung, "the golden mead had been their poison." At all events, the charge of Oswald was irresistible. Heavy with sleep, paralysed with the effects of the feasting of the night before, the British ranks of Cadwallon gave way. The experience of many a battle was renewed this time, with even more than the usual result. The Northmen triumphed. Cadwallon's army, surprised by the sudden and fierce attack, fled in disorder; and the British king, hero of a hundred bloody fights, was slain.

The scene of the battle, Bede, writing scarcely a hundred years after, tells us was called the Heavenfield. Our chronicler evidently thought it was so named before the battle—a presage of what was after-

wards to happen; far more probably, the striking circumstances which accompanied the famous victory were the occasion of the name. The dream of Oswald, the setting up of the huge wooden cross, the passionate prayer which preceded the Engle onslaught, suggested the name by which this decisive victory has ever been known; decisive in truth, for it cleared Northumbria from the British invading army, leaving Oswald at liberty to reorganise the shattered dominions of the dead Edwin; decisive, also, in that this was the last rally of the British. Their strength was now exhausted, and henceforth all they attempted was a stubborn defence of the wild hills and uplands of the west, their last refuge from the storm of Saxon and Engle conquest.

The reign of Oswald lasted scarcely eight years, but the years were eventful years. He did more toward the making of our Christian England than, perhaps, any sovereign who has since sat on the English throne. He was, as we have seen, a brave and skilful general. His power was recognised, and his over-lordship acknowledged, as completely as was his predecessor Edwin's, in the northern districts of Britain and the lowlands of Scotland. Even the Midland Engles, including all the broad dominions known as Mercia, yielded to the powerful Northumbrian monarch a nominal submission. No chieftain of the Northmen who came before him possessed the power and authority of Oswald. Chroniclers of his own day and time, and their words have been repeated since, saw in him, indeed, a faint likeness of those Roman emperors who for a season had made Britain their abode. Adamnan, abbot of Iona, the well-known biographer of Columba, who wrote in the year 692, positively styles Oswald "Emperor of the whole of Britain."

But his great work consisted in the foundation stones, which he laid so well of the English Christianity of the future. It was not only his mere determination to tell his people the story of Christianity, but

OSWALD'S DOMINIONS.

his conception of how and by whom that story should be told, so as to reach the Engle heart, which is his especial title to honour. Forty years had now passed since Augustine landed in Kent, but no real way had been made in the conversion to Christianity of the Northern conquerors. The Italian missionaries had failed, as we have seen, to make any permanent impression upon London and the East Saxons of Essex, or upon the Engles of East Anglia to the north of

London. There is no record of any attempt having been made, nor is there any trace of their presence, among the South Saxons in Sussex, although these districts had been invaded by Ælla as early as in 477, and for more than a hundred years, when Augustine landed, fact that before Augustine's arrival the Kentish queen Bertha was a Christian, trained in the schools of Italy and Rome; and that during her lifetime her great influence and authority were successfully exerted in favour of Augustine and his companions.

HOLY ISLAND. *Photo: M. Auty, Tynemouth.*

Sussex had been purely a Saxon district. In the north of the island Paulinus' indefatigable work, and failure, have already been related. Only in Kent had the Roman mission been really successful. Kent may be said to have been Christian throughout when Oswald became king of Northumbria in the year 634; and at Canterbury several foundations of considerable influence existed, including a monastery, a library, and schools. This solitary conspicuous success was probably in large degree owing to the

It was from no apparent lack of zeal, or perseverance, or ability, that those devoted men met with such a scant measure of success; save that their pretensions to a supreme authority in matters of government and ritual wrecked their efforts to bring about a union with the fugitives of the ancient British church. They seem to have conducted their work among the pagan Engles and Saxons with prudence, tact, and earnestness. Some deeper cause for their failure must be

sought for. It may be that a contempt for Italy and the South, which not unnaturally existed among the Northmen conquerors, influenced the invaders of the Roman missionaries, weighed with the Northmen conquerors in their dislike of, or rather, perhaps, apathetic reception of, these missionaries. At all events, the

ST. MATTHEW, FROM THE LINDISFARNE (OR DURHAM) GOSPEL BOOK : *circ.* A.D. 700. (*British Museum*).

Britain against these preachers of the faith of Christ. No doubt these fearless Northmen cherished some respect for the Britons who so stoutly and gallantly resisted to the death their conquest; and not improbably the intense dislike of the remnant of the British Christians to conversion of the conquerors of Britain was reserved for another school of teachers altogether.

The Engle king of Northumbria, after his decisive victory at the Heavenfield (635), became the dominant power in the island. Oswald was one of those rare souls

who on the throne united the qualities of a great king with those of a great saint. Among those kings who were in some sense saints, but who in kingly qualities were sadly deficient, Henry VI. is a notable example; while in that rarer class in which the true king and the genuine saint are combined, king Alfred of England and St. Louis of France are conspicuous instances. Oswald the Northumbrian, less known to the everyday student of history, ranks with these last true great ones; indeed, in some respects we owe to him a greater debt than even to the kingly Alfred, loved of men, for Oswald must be regarded as the first maker of Christian England.

It has been well said, that in Oswald a new conception of kingship began to blend itself with that of the warlike glory of his ancestors, the reckless and gallant sea-kings. Bede, whose picture of this hero-saint possesses a singular charm, tells us how, "by reason of his constant habit of praying or giving thanks to the Lord, he was wont, when he sat, to hold his hands upturned upon his knees." During the long early exile which preceded his summons to the throne of his people, his training and education among the monks of Iona had given him that strong love of religion which in after time coloured all his works and days. Although a great general and able strategist, and at the same time a wise and patient ruler, his life was as devout as if he lived in the cloister; and frequently half the night was spent by this ancient Engle king in prayer. It is no wonder that such a rare soul possessed the key of hearts, and during his too short reign attracted a general enthusiasm, reverence, and love.

His first desire after restoring peace and quiet in his kingdom, was to make the peoples of his broad realms Christians. His thoughts at once turned to the old loved home of Iona, at that time, in the first half of the seventh century, in its full strength and prosperity, the memory of Columba still green, and the enthusiasm for true learning and missionary work as yet undimmed in that great home of prayer. Oswald sent to the monastery of Columba for a missionary bishop, who should organise and direct the Christian campaign among his Engle peoples. Seghine, the fifth abbot in succession to Columba, was then ruling over the great Iona community and the many daughter-houses of Columba's famous foundation. The first choice of Iona seems to have been an unfortunate one. The monk Corman, who was chosen as missionary bishop—whose name in an uncertain tradition has been preserved to us—made but little way among Oswald's pagan subjects, and soon returned to his monastery, throwing up his difficult and responsible charge. "Nothing," he is said to have declared in a council of the elders of his house, "could be made of the Engles; they were a race of untamable savages; their spirit was stubborn, even barbarous."

As the fathers of Columba's house at length discussed the thorny question of the Engle mission, one of the monks, Aidan, of whose early life we know nothing, rose and spoke thus before his brethren to the disheartened missionary: "It seems, my brother," he said, "your judgment of these ignorant peoples is too hard. Your teaching has been too severe; you have expected too much at first; you

have not, according to the apostolic counsel, offered them first the milk of gentle doctrine, so as by degrees to lead them to the understanding and practice of more advanced and deeper commands." Aidan's words strongly impressed his brother monks. All at once turned to him, as the fittest of their number to undertake the difficult work. He accepted the mission without delay; and receiving consecration as a bishop, betook himself to king Oswald in Northumbria in the summer of the year 635, just ten years after Paulinus had arrived in the north with Edwin's queen Ethelburga.

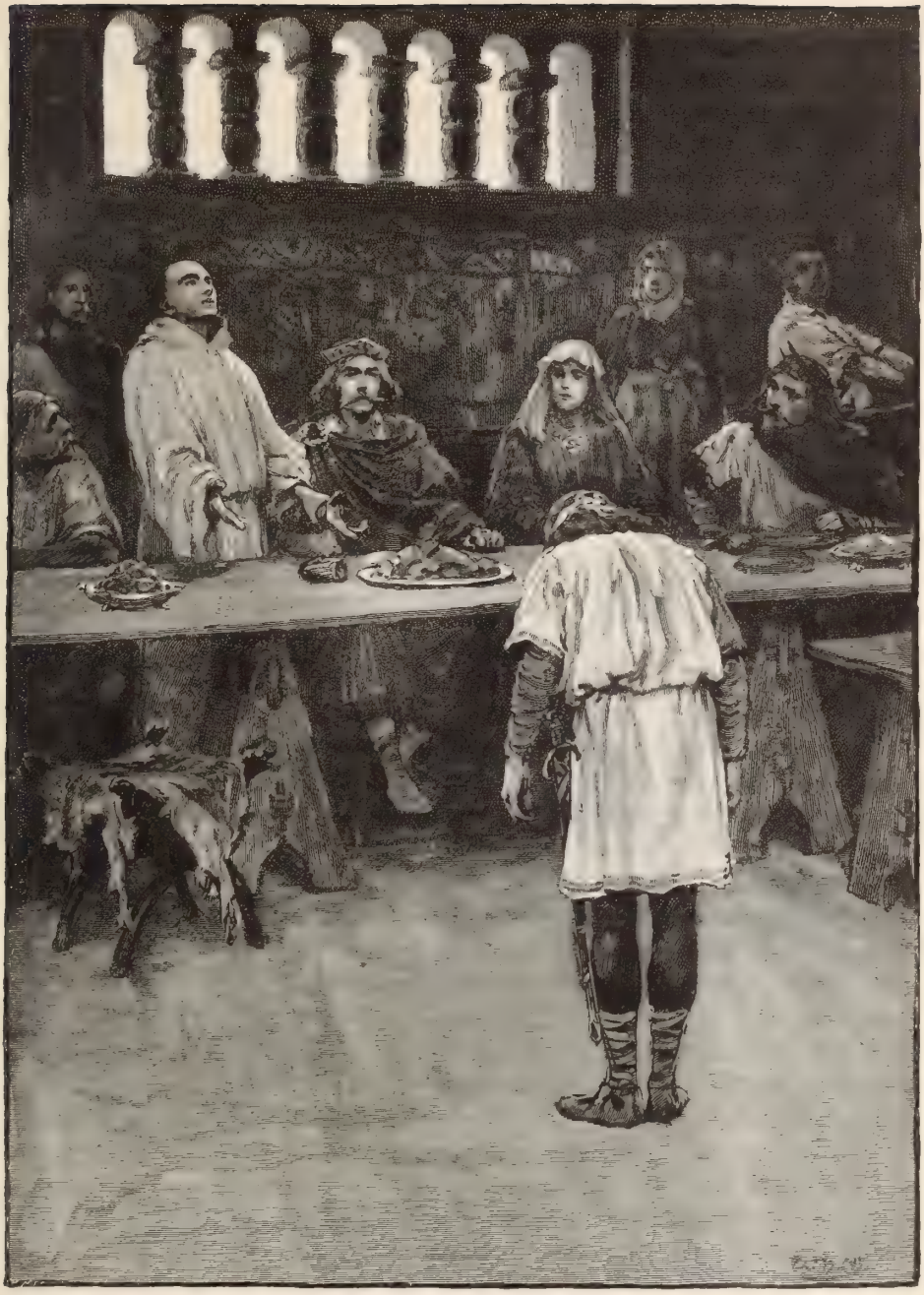
Of Paulinus' mission, when Aidan came, there were no visible traces in Northumbria—neither churches nor schools, nor a single Christian community. The whole county was pagan; the very footprints of Paulinus had been obliterated before the Iona teacher took up the work. Indeed Bede, whose sympathies were certainly ever with Rome and her teachers, tells us that in Bernicia, the northern part of the Northumbrian kingdom, until the Cross was planted by Oswald just before the fight with Cadwallon in the Heavenfield, no one had ever seen a church, or an altar, or any emblem of the Christian faith. In the southern parts of the realm of Oswald, it is probable, however, that the mission of Paulinus was not completely forgotten; indeed, James the Deacon, the only companion of Paulinus whose name is preserved, apparently never ceased from his quiet but noble work in Catterick, a township in the Deira province.

Aidan chose a strange home for himself in that heathen land in which he hoped to plant his Master's faith. He passed by York, in the southern part of Oswald's wide dominion; York, with its immemorial tradition, with its half-finished church, well-nigh, with the exception of James the Deacon's little church at Catterick, the only spot in the north where a few Christians still kept just burning a feeble lamp of religious life. He chose as his home, as the seat of the bishopric of his vast diocese, where well-nigh all were pagans, a little barren island to the north of the Tyne and Wear, some ten miles from Berwick on the Tweed. Its utter solitude constituted its charm in the eyes of the Celtic monk. It was some two miles from the mainland, from which at low water it could be reached on foot; treeless, featureless; only the sorriest crops could ever be raised on its barren soil; constantly swept over by the cold, damp, North Sea winds. Perhaps its dreary likeness to his own passionately loved Iona, where Columba had founded his famous prayer-centre, influenced Aidan's choice of Lindisfarne, known in after days as the Holy Isle. From this melancholy spot Aidan and his companions, as they looked towards the south, could see the huge tower of Bamborough, built by the founder of Oswald's dynasty, king Ida—Bamborough, so well known later in mediæval story as "Joyeuse Garde"; and in the far distance, with evening tide the lights of Oswald's favourite castle could be discerned, gleaming over the North Sea waves.

But it was probably only at rare intervals that the great missionary rested in his desolate sea-washed home, for his labours on the mainland were incessant. Something in Aidan's character and spirit seems to have mightily touched the wild

pagan Engles of the north, and to have won them to listen reverently to his story of the Cross and Redemption. Eloquence, of course, in no small degree was his; but it was not his eloquence which alone attracted the rough Northumbrian Engle; it was his tender, sympathetic, self-sacrificing self which touched them. Bede, who had no love for Celtic monks, exhausts his vocabulary when he writes of this Aidan; when he tells us of his surpassing gentleness, piety, and self-restraint. The highest and the lowest, the man-at-arms and the poorest peasant, the king and the slave, went and knelt down with passionate devotion at the feet of the Celtic missionary. Those Celtic evangelists possessed in a strange degree, never possessed since, the magic key of hearts. In all lands their terrible austerities, their life-long asceticism, their deep, intense sympathy with men, and with those very passions and vices which they cursed with awful curses, but at the same time wept over with the bitterest tears; all this won impulsive men in that wild and lawless time, often enough wearied and stricken with the sore stress and struggle of that iron age of tumult and excess. Teachers like Aidan and Columba could see beauty in the fiercest and most cruel barbarian, and had the rare power of evoking that spirit of tenderness and love which ever lurks even in the darkest and most abandoned hearts.

One of Bede's stories of this strange, great man well illustrates the boundless character of his charities and his utter disregard of himself; and Bede, we must remember, was born about twenty-two years after Aidan's death, so that such stories when he wrote them down were still fresh and vivid in men's minds. It was far on in Aidan's career. Oswald's successor, king Oswin, pained at seeing the loved old man ever performing his ceaseless rounds on foot, persuaded the devoted missionary to accept from him a horse. The king chose his best steed, and gave it splendidly caparisoned to Aidan, and for a time he used it; but being, as Bede picturesquely calls him, "the father and the worshipper of the poor," one day when he met a man in deep poverty who asked for alms, Aidan dismounted from his horse, and gave it all harnessed as it was to the poor man. That day Aidan dined with the king, who had been told of his guest's reckless gift of his horse and trappings. As they sat at meat together, the king said: "Lord Bishop, why did you give the horse I specially chose for your use to that beggar-man? Had I not many a horse of less value, and other goods I could have given you for alms? Why did you give that special one away?" "O king," replied the saint, "is a horse, which is after all only the son of a mare, dearer to you than the man, who is the son of God?" And the king was silent, and thought over the words of Aidan, what they signified, and what he meant to teach him. After a time Oswin took off his sword, and throwing himself at the saint's feet, begged his pardon for his words of remonstrance. "Never more shall I regret anything of mine that you give to the children of God." Then, singularly enough, at the kind and loving words of the Northumbrian king, the bishop became very sad, and was noticed weeping. A companion of Aidan's in the royal hall asked his master the reason of



"'MAY THIS HAND NEVER PERISH!'" (*p.* 139).

his great sadness. Aidan answered in the Celtic tongue, which the king and his thanes spoke not: "I know now the king will not live long; never until now have I seen a monarch so humble. The nation is not worthy of such a prince." And, alas! his prophetic words were soon verified.

Though his monk biographer delights to give us, in his own graphic, picturesque way, such curious instances as the scene or the giving away the king's horse above related, of Aidan's passionate love for the poor and destitute, the sorrowful and uncared-for, these rare scenes by no means fairly represent Aidan's really beautiful life. He was eminently practical in his usual ways of working, leaving nothing to chance or passing emotion. His charm of manner, his zeal and devoted piety, his great learning, attracted many scholars and earnest and skilful missionaries, teachers, and preachers from Ireland, which at that time we know was the great centre of the learning and religious enterprise of western Europe. His relations with the famous house of Iona, close to the scenes of his labours, were most intimate. He began by gathering round him a small band of youths of rare and especial promise; several of these, by their splendid work in later life, amply justified his choice of them, and showed how far-seeing in human character was this true apostle of the north.

Among these loved pupils of his early days were Chad and his brother Cedd, the unwearied evangelists of East and Middle England; and Wilfrid, the most famous, perhaps, of the northern churchmen, to whom Rome and her school in after years owed so much. Eata, too, his successor at Lindisfarne, a name of rare power in the north, was one of those who had been with Aidan from the beginning. Daily recruits came to him from the vast Irish monasteries. Monasteries and schools were built under Aidan's direction in various parts of Oswald's dominions, and the Engles, as a people, crowded to hear the universally loved and admired Celtic apostle and his followers. A network of Christian fortresses by degrees covered the land. The south of Scotland and Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire, and even farther afield, were becoming under these powerful influences rapidly Christian. King Oswald—and the royal example seems to have been largely followed by the Engle thanes—endowed these numerous rising schools and monasteries with profuse gifts of lands and property of various descriptions.

We possess many details of the private life led by this eminent saint of God. In the midst of his restless, work-filled hours of preaching, teaching, organising, he never neglected the constant habit of study. This intense love of learning was one of the great characteristic features of Celtic monasticism. As a rule, Aidan, in his perpetual mission journeys through the length and breadth of king Oswald's realm, travelled on foot. This habit of walking gave him facilities for entering into conversation with all sorts and conditions of men. While they walked it was the habit of Aidan and his companions to meditate on texts of Scripture or to recite Psalms; they never might be idle.

With two of the Northumbrian kings the famous missionary bishop was on terms of affectionate intimacy, and occasionally,

when he was at his Lindisfarne home, he would dine with the king, with whom the neighbouring fortress of Bamborough, built by king Ida, was ever a favourite royal residence. Aidan had a church and a bed-chamber hard by Bamborough. On these occasions, after sitting a short time at table, Aidan would rise and retire in order "to read" with his brethren, or to pray. Once, it was on a certain Easter Sunday, Aidan was with the king as he dined. Among the German races these invitations to the royal table were signs of the most marked distinction. A silver dish, filled with delicacies, was placed before the king; just then the officer to whom the charge of the royal alms was entrusted entered the dining-hall, and told the king how a crowd of destitute folk were outside beseeching the king's alms. King Oswald immediately gave orders that the food, and the silver dish which contained it, the latter broken in pieces, should be divided among these poor folk. As the king stretched out his hand to give the order, Aidan seized it and cried, "May this hand never perish!" Like other remarkable sayings of the saint, his words were prophetic. One short year after this royal feast at Bamborough, Oswald was slain in the fatal fight at Maserfield. *The hand* was severed from the mutilated body, and picked up on the battle-field. It was subsequently enshrined in a silver casket and placed in St. Peter's church, Bamborough; and Bede says, in his day, it was still there undecayed. Tradition loves to assert that this hand, preserved as a precious relic of the saint-king, remained undecayed for centuries.

As regards the *teaching* of Aidan and the Iona and Irish missionaries, in all real essentials this was absolutely identical with the doctrine taught at Rome when Gregory the Great was pope, or at Canterbury when Augustine ruled as archbishop. The differences between the Celtic and Roman schools—which were as time went on so sadly accentuated, and eventually caused, or at least were used as pretexts for, the bitter dissensions between Celtic and Roman Christianity—were after all trivial, and principally consisted in the date appointed for keeping the solemn Easter Feast, and in the curious difference in the tonsure of the monk and priest. Mass, for this was the usual name by which the great service of the Church was known,* was celebrated with rites probably more in accordance with what is termed the Gallican than the Roman use; but the essentials of the sacred service were absolutely the same, and the language used to express the mysteries of the Eucharist was as familiar to the disciples of Iona or Lindisfarne as to the churchmen of Italy and Gaul. We read in the beautiful biography of Columba, composed by Adamnan, abbot of Iona, within fifty years of the death of Aidan, a description of Columba's standing "before the altar and consecrating the sacred oblation." At Iona, in Columba's time, there was not, however, a daily celebration, and at Lindisfarne, at the close of the seventh century, Mass was only celebrated on Sundays. No traces whatever as yet appear in these Celtic churches of any worship of or special devotion towards the

* The full signification and derivation of this term is given in Excursus B, "on the word Mass," at the end of the volume.

Virgin Mary. This remarkable cult cannot be said, either, to have formed part of Roman teaching in these early centuries.

The conventual rule laid down for the professed "religious" by the great Irish houses, by Columban at Luxeuil, by Columba at Iona, and Aidan at Lindisfarne, was most severe; much more so than the rule of Benedict, which eventually, probably by reason of its gentler precepts, gradually supplanted it on this island, as well as on the continent of Europe. Of the dress which Aidan habitually wore we possess some curious details in Bede's history. While on his missionary journeys he wore sandals, and a thick woollen "cuculla," or cloak; in winter these garments were thicker, and a tunic was added. The front of his head showed the Irish ample tonsure; behind, the long hair flowed down.

The labours of Aidan in the north of England lasted sixteen years; eight years with Oswald at his right hand—Oswald his dearest friend, the magnificent king of Northumbria, the "Emperor," as he has been styled, of Britain, certainly the overlord of the largest and richest portion of the island; and eight years after Oswald's defeat and death at the hands of the heathen Mercian, Penda, at Maserfield (Oswestry). The last eight years was, perhaps, the more remarkable period, for it was a period of stress and storm, of sorrow and desolation; and during this sad period of trial the work of Aidan stood. The foundations of Christianity had been laid by him too strongly for persecution, troubles, and the sword to uproot, or even to harm them. The attenuated and enfeebled empire of Oswald, reduced to the northern provinces between the Humber and the Forth, were divided, as we shall see, between Oswald's brother Oswiu and his kinsman Oswin. Oswin ruled over the southern portion, Deira, including Yorkshire; playing, however, little more than the part of an under-king to Penda. But during this sad time the Christianity of Aidan and Oswald remained the dominant religion of Deira, and, watched over by Aidan, kept steadily winning its way.

The Celtic missionary bishop was tenderly attached to this Oswin, and the friendship between them was ever unbroken. Indeed Oswin, though not a great statesman or soldier like Oswald, or his kinsman who ruled in the north, was evidently a most lovable prince. The picture of his character has been reckoned as one of Bede's best and most lifelike portraits. In person he was tall and handsome, affable in speech and courteous in behaviour to all sorts and conditions of men, generally beloved and admired; from many a distant province men of the noblest birth came and asked to be thanes in the hall of Oswin of Deira. His deep and unostentatious piety and fervent love for the doctrines of Christ, made him especially precious in the eyes of the saintly Aidan. His premature death was a most melancholy one; he was assassinated by the orders of his jealous kinsman Oswiu, who afterwards attained the loftiest position in the island.

The foul murder of his beloved friend and monarch broke the saintly Aidan's heart. He was an old man, and the terrible news of the assassination of his king brought on an illness which the worn-out old labourer for God had not strength to fight

against. Only twelve days after his friend king Oswin's death the fatal sickness seized Aidan, who was staying in a village under the shadow of the royal castle of Bamborough, hard by his holy house of Lindisfarne. The dying Aidan was too weak to be moved. His faithful friends, we read, laid him on the ground, and erected a rough tent to shield him from the winds. Close by him was a little wooden church. Men say that as he was dying he leant against its buttress at the west end, and there, with his head resting on the house of prayer which he had built years ago in Oswald's lifetime, gave up his pure soul to God. The date has been preserved; it was the 31st of August, 651. The day of his death is fitly designated in the Calendar "The rest of Aidan"—*Quies Aidani.*

BAMBOROUGH CASTLE.
(*By permission of Charles P. MacCarthy, Esq.*)

That night—so runs the story of Bede, who wrote only a little more than fifty years after Aidan's death—a shepherd boy, whose name in after years rang through Europe, was watching his sheep among the pastures of Lammermoor; on a sudden he saw a long stream of light flashing through the darkness of the night,* and in that dazzling trail of splendour imagined that he beheld a crowd of heavenly beings descending to the earth. As he watched he saw them quickly reascend, and with them a spirit of surpassing brightness, whom they apparently had fetched from the earth. He roused his companion shepherds, and related to them what he had seen. "While we sleep," he said, "we never think of the holy angels who never slumber. So to-night while I

* Probably a stream of meteors.

was awake and watching, I saw a great company of these bright spirits carrying from earth to heaven the spirit of some holy man, who now is gazing at the glories of the heavenly mansions and of Christ the King." The next day the news came to Lammermoor that Aidan, the saint of Lindisfarne, had entered into his rest. Bede adds that it was this strange vision of "the passing of Aidan" which induced the shepherd boy, Cuthbert, to enter upon that tireless career of devotion, toil, and prayer which in after years so powerfully influenced the life of that eventful age which witnessed the building up the Church of our fathers.

Aidan was interred in his own holy house of Lindisfarne. Thirteen years later, when bishop Colman, his successor, after the Council of Whitby left Lindisfarne for ever, he took with him to Iona some of the bones of Aidan. In 875 the rest of his remains were placed in the coffin of St. Cuthbert, when the Danes threatened the safety of Lindisfarne, and they accompanied the relics of Cuthbert in their long wanderings.

In tracing Aidan's later career, we have anticipated somewhat. King Oswald's eventful reign lasted scarcely eight years. Until Aidan acquired perfect familiarity with the Engle dialect, it seems to have been no unusual thing for the king to be present at Aidan's impassioned discourses on the Christian faith, and with his own lips to render in "English" to the great officers of his court, his earls and thanes, the burning, eloquent words of his friend and teacher, the apostle of his people; Aidan during the earlier part of his ministry preferring to speak in the soft Celtic speech, with which king Oswald was perfectly acquainted, owing to his long residence during the years of his exile at Iona.

Great and eminent though Oswald of Northumbria was, he would have been forgotten among the many kings and chiefs of that confused age of war and conquest, had it not been for the undying work of his friend and adviser, Aidan. Who now, save a few Anglo-Saxon students, cares to remember such names as Penda of Mercia or Edwin of Northumbria? And yet these Northmen in their day ruled over a realm as great, and exercised an influence as far-reaching as did Oswald, whose name is still treasured and honoured in our national annals, after some 1,250 years, as one of the chief makers of our England.

To Oswald belongs the supreme merit of having discerned the strange and mighty power of the Celtic church. There was naturally an antipathy on the part of the Engle and Saxon princes, even when they were irresistibly drawn to the story of Christianity, to take as their guides and as the teachers of their peoples men who belonged to the proscribed and hated Celtic race, whom they had driven out of the fairest parts of Britain. That Oswald rose superior to this national antipathy, and placed himself and his nation unreservedly in the hands of the hated Celt, will ever be his title to honour in England. The immediate result of this we have seen in the rapid change which, after the coming of Aidan and his companions, passed over Northumbria. It was all accomplished in eight short years; but the work, rapidly though it was carried through, was an enduring one, and the work done by Aidan and his Iona friends has

endured the testing stress of time and change. The Christianity of the Engles —the Englishmen—was an accomplished fact before Oswald's death, which happened only eight years after the coming of Aidan.

The secret of the marvellous and enduring success of the Iona Celtic teachers of Christianity among the North-folk, and the comparative failure of Rome among the self-same peoples, can only be partially guessed. Rome remains among us ; the sources of her enduring strength and apparently undying power, also her weaknesses and faults, are all before us to-day. She has changed but little, save perhaps that her policy has accentuated her weaknesses and faults since the days of Ethelbert of Kent and Edwin of Northumbria. Augustine and Paulinus, under other names, are with us still. Pope Gregory the Great's successor, strangely little altered, issues his wise or foolish decrees from the same imperial centre. Changeless in the midst of change, deathless when all around seems dying, Rome lives on as it did aforetime, now as then a mighty, if not the mightiest, power in our world. To argue, then, on the causes which were at work in the seventh century and which only allowed Rome a partial success, is easy : for Rome, little changed, is with us now.

But to speak with anything like absolute certainty of the causes which led to the strange, the perfect, the enduring success of the Celt in the person of Aidan and the Iona men, in the evangelisation of the Engles — the Englishmen — is another matter. It is—it must remain—one of the secrets of history. We may guess ; and though probably our guess may be a happy one, may even touch the truth, yet it can only be at best a happy guess. The sources of their marvellous success must ever remain hidden, for the Celtic church—as represented so faithfully by the two great missionaries, Columba of Iona and Columban of Luxeuil ; by Gall in Switzerland ; by Aidan in Northumbria ; by the abbots and teachers of such mighty communities as Moville and Bangor in Ireland —has completely disappeared.

The Celtic man of God, the missionary of the type of Columba and Aidan, exercised evidently a peculiar fascination over the child-like minds of the North-folk, fresh from their wild, uncultured life among the fiords of Scandinavia and the forests of northern Germany. These half-savage North-folk, though often cruel and vengeful, often swayed hither and thither by fatal passions, were in many ways generous and noble ; they were simple, untaught children, waiting for someone to lead them and guide them into the better way. On these untutored hearts the cold and calculating, highly cultured Italians, austere and pure, but often self-seeking and proud, made but little impression. The stateliness of their worship, their splendid organisation, their love for order and obedience, failed to touch the Northman's heart. The beauty of holiness had to be presented in another form, before these untaught children of the North—for they were little more—could recognise its power and desirableness.

Just what Augustine and Paulinus and their followers lacked, Columba and Aidan and the Celtic school of teachers possessed. The ineffable and tireless tenderness, the deep and wide human sympathy of the Irish and Scottish

preachers, at once found the hearts of Engle and Saxon. That mighty, tender love kindled by the love of the Crucified, which burned in the hearts of men like Aidan,* a love which flowed over the souls of men to all that the Crucified made—beasts of the field and birds of the air—a love which claimed kinship and brotherhood with all things created, a love which understood and chose to share the lot of the poor, the weak, the wretched; this it was which comforted so many stricken souls with its boundless sympathy. Their awful severity towards all wrong-doing, their terrible sternness, alternated with this deep tenderness in its numberless forms, literally took the impressionable hearts of these North-folk by storm; and the conquest of hearts was completed by the contrast which the Celtic preachers presented in their own lives, coloured with rigid asceticism, prolonged fasting, cruel penances, countless vigils, long night watches, ceaseless prayer. The Celtic missionaries would have naught to do with land or gold or honours. They wanted nothing, asked for nothing, but the hearts of the men of war, to whom they told the story which they accepted themselves with a passionate belief—the story of the cross and the passion of the Christ, and His blessed work of redemption among men.

* Dean Church.

In addition to the mighty effect produced by these rare gifts and graces, the king, the chieftain, the thane, as they grew in knowledge and experience, became conscious that these devoted and earnest, these self-denying and generous men, were no mere enthusiastic talkers, but possessed vast stores of learning and knowledge; that their homes in Ireland and Scotland were world-renowned centres of learning, whither resorted crowds of disciples, even from those far Southern seats of wealth and culture—which were the object at once of the cupidity and wonder of all Northmen.

It seems to us sad that this wonderful Celtic Christianity should so soon have disappeared, giving place to another form of our Master's religion in which the old Celtic fervour and passionate enthusiasm was wanting. For so it was to be—and doubtless it was well. Yet while in the long roll of great churchmen many names occur to us—names such as Boniface, Alcuin, Dunstan, Anselm, Bernard, Francis, Dominic—which in different lands have played a more or less noble part in the world's history, and shown themselves in various ways "lovers of men," none since the Celtic men of God seem to have possessed in equal degree that key to human hearts which Columba, Aidan, and their disciples used to such good purpose and such wonderful effect.

DORCHESTER ABBEY. *Photo: H. W. Taunt, Oxford.*

CHAPTER VIII.

WORK OF THE CELTIC MISSIONARIES IN ENGLAND.

Wessex—Influence of Oswald's Marriage upon the King of Wessex—Bishop Birinus—King Sigebert of East Anglia—Slow Progress of Christianity, and Fresh Impulse again given by Celtic Preachers—Fursey—His Poetic Visions, and their Influence upon the Doctrine of Purgatory—Gradual Spread of Christianity in East Anglia—In Spite of Defeat by Penda—Mercia under Penda—The Christian and Pagan Champions meet—Death of Oswald—Reverence for his Memory in England—Defeat and Death of Penda—The East Saxons—Their Evangelisation also due to Celtic Missionaries after Roman Failure—Cedd—Summary of the Evangelistic Work of the Roman and Celtic Missionaries.

THE historian ever loves to linger over the life of a favourite hero, and to put off the recital of the day when the grave closed over one whom for a time his pen has clothed with flesh and blood. Before telling of that dread day which finished all too soon the life and reign of Oswald, just a few lines must be devoted to his marriage, which, as far as we can see through the mists of an age which possesses only scant records of this portion of his life's story, had far-reaching consequences. Bede, our unerring guide for this period, well-nigh fails us here. He evidently had no detailed information of that great division of the island known as Wessex, and her early story of conquest and settlement. Wessex, the country of the West Saxons, extended from the Thames to the Severn, from the little kingdom of Kent to the mountains of Wales, where the Britons had entrenched themselves; and for a long period after its complete conquest by the Northmen exercised comparatively little influence in Britain, owing to the perpetual dissensions and bloody wars among its own especial tribal chiefs and kings. During much of this dark period it remained pagan; no Christian influences

seem to have penetrated into what is now known as Sussex, Hampshire, Dorset, Somerset, Wilts, and Gloucestershire, which roughly made up that broad tract of England then known as Wessex.

Montalembert's words on the brighter day which at last dawned on this part of England deserve to be quoted. Intensely Roman, more or less opposed to every Christian influence which had not its source in Rome, he yet writes as follows of Wessex: "From the cloister of Lindisfarne, and the heart of those districts in which the popularity of ascetic pontiffs such as Aidan, and martyr kings such as Oswald and Oswin, took day by day a deeper root, Northumbrian Christianity spread over the southern kingdoms. . . . What is distinctly visible is the influence of Celtic priests and missionaries, everywhere replacing or seconding the Roman missionaries, and reaching districts which their predecessors had never been able to enter. The stream of the divine word thus extended itself *from north to south*, and its slow but certain course reached in succession all the peoples of the Heptarchy. Life and light infused themselves through all, and everywhere, along with the immaculate sacrifice, the hymns of a people freed from the yoke of idolatry rose towards the living God." * He then describes what he called the progress of the Celtic monks, trained in the school of the great Columba, into the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms *south of the Humber*.

For some two centuries after the early settlements of the West Saxons in the south of the island, the strength of Wessex was broken by the dissensions which arose between rival chiefs of the royal line of Cerdic. These prevented this powerful and widely extended tribe from exercising the influence in Britain which their numbers and the vast extent of the country appropriated by them, generally known as Wessex, would naturally have given to the West Saxons. Successively, Kent, East Anglia, and then, to a still greater degree, Northumbria, we have seen occupying the principal place and exercising a general supremacy in the island; but Wessex never during this period came to the front.

In the reign of Oswald (634), a king of the Odin-descended line of Cerdic, Cynegils, was recognised by his fellow Saxon tribesmen as king over a large portion at least of Wessex. About this time, Bede tells us how a missionary named Birinus, about whose nationality and previous history nothing is known, under a commission from Pope Honorius I., landed in Hampshire, with the view of sowing the seed of life in districts of Britain where no Christian preacher had as yet penetrated. Birinus found Hampshire entirely pagan, and remained in these parts. King Cynegils consented to receive baptism. Oswald, the saint-king of Northumbria, appears, however, to have exercised considerable influence in the matter of this conversion of the king of Wessex. Probably to extend the Northumbrian power in the south of the island, Oswald asked for and obtained the hand of the daughter of Cynegils of Wessex in marriage. The great Northumbrian came south, and before his marriage witnessed the baptism of his future father-in-law, the Wessex

* "Monks of the West."

king, at a place named Dorchester, near the modern Abingdon, a few miles from Oxford. Oswald and Cynegils settled Birinus as bishop at Dorchester, where the ancient abbey church of St. Peter and St. Paul occupies the traditional spot which witnessed the meeting of Oswald and his father-in-law, and the solemn baptism of the latter, the king of Wessex, from whom the present Royal House of England is lineally descended.

From Dorchester as his centre, Birinus went up and down among the West Saxons, preaching and baptising, "calling many people to the Lord," in Bede's quaint language, building and consecrating churches, and in the end was laid to rest in this same Dorchester. But Bede only gives us this bare summary of his work; no detailed information was procurable in his day; not a single feature of his successes or failures, save the baptism of Cynegils under the influence of Oswald, is known to us. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle just mentions the fact that in the year 636 king Cwichelm, son of Cynegils, was baptised at Dorchester, and how in 639 Birinus baptised king Cuthred, a son of Cwichelm, at the same place.

Any direct commission from Pope Honorius to Birinus seems a little doubtful, for no communication between Birinus and Canterbury, the headquarters of the Roman mission, seems ever to have existed. This would surely have been the case had Birinus been commissioned by Rome, as Rome and Canterbury were in constant communication. It is more probable that the attempt to Christianise Wessex was the direct work of Oswald of Northumbria, after his alliance with the daughter of the Wessex king. But Christianity, in spite of all the labours of Birinus, made but a feeble lodgment at first in this part of Britain; for Kenwald, the son and successor of Cynegils, was a pagan, and only after a period of exile into which the army of the heathen Penda of Mercia had driven him, did he renounce the worship of Woden. This Kenwald was reinstated as king in 648, and then Christianity made a fresh start in Wessex, owing to the fervid preaching of a Celtic missionary from Ireland, a Frank named Agilbert, who became in the year 650 the bishop of the West Saxon peoples.

These few bare facts are all that is known of Christianity in that great portion of our island which lay between Kent and the Severn, in the first half of the seventh century. We thus gather that only a very partial conversion of the pagan conquerors took place, and that what little was done was mainly owing to Oswald's influence in the first place, while subsequently the work was taken up by missionaries from the Celtic church in Ireland.

Engle or Angle tribes occupied the eastern counties of Britain, who were closely allied by tribal ties to the Engles of Northumbria on the north, and to the Engles of Mercia on the west. The supremacy over the extensive tract of the island usually spoken of as East Anglia, after the death of the East Engle king, Redwald, who in his lifetime exercised an acknowledged supremacy over the Mercian Engles, was constantly a matter of dispute between the Engle kings of Northumbria and Mercia, who in turn claimed the over-lordship of East Anglia.

We have already noticed Redwald's unusual procedure in the question of religion, and how he set up an altar to Christ by the side of the altars of Woden and Thor. This was in the days of Edwin's exile and Paulinus' residence at Redwald's court, about the year 617. Under Edwin and Northumbrian influence, Redwald's son and successor, Eorpwald, became a Christian convert, but he failed to carry his East Engle people with him in his adoption of Christianity, and by a domestic conspiracy he was killed in 628. His half-brother Sigebert became king in his room. Sigebert had long been an exile from his country, and had resided in Gaul. During his sojourn among the Franks, Sigebert had become an earnest Christian convert, and had devoted himself to letters. He is known as Sigebert the Learned. On his return to East Anglia, in 630-631, he was accompanied by a devoted and earnest Burgundian bishop named Felix, who received much assistance from Canterbury and its flourishing monastic schools. Bede writes of this Felix as "a pious cultivator of the spiritual field," and speaking of his episcopate of seventeen years as a time full of happiness for the Christian cause, dwells on the good omen of his name, "Felix." Sigebert settled this Felix at Dunwich, a city now swept away by the encroachment of the North Sea.

The king and the bishop made some progress in Christianising the Engles of the eastern counties. But the great impulse towards their conversion was given by the arrival of one of those devoted Celtic missionaries from Ireland, whose enthusiasm was the principal agent in the conversion of the North-folk in most parts of the island. This Irish monk, whose name was Fursey, was assisted by several companions, his kinsmen and pupils. They came to East Anglia about A.D. 633. The usual enthusiasm for the new faith was kindled by this Irishman and his fellow-missionaries, and the rapid conversion of the eastern Engles was largely due to their work and example. Their head-quarters were fixed on the site of the modern Burgh Castle in Suffolk, where their community was endowed by king Sigebert's bounty with a large estate, surrounded with woods and near to the sea. Here the Irish monk erected a great monastery, which was soon afterwards, according to Bede, adorned with more stately buildings and further endowed. This great religious house became the centre and mother-house of various other monastic foundations in the eastern counties—great houses of prayer and learning which revered Fursey as their founder. They were mostly double communities of monks and nuns, according to the Celtic usage. Fursey subsequently retired from East Anglia, apparently hopelessly dispirited at the success of the heathen Penda of Mercia. We hear of him, however, again in Gaul, where he founded the monastery of Lagny, a small town on the Marne, a few miles north of Paris. He died in the year 650. In Gaul his name is venerated as one of that "goodly fellowship" which took up and developed the vast, many-sided work of that noblest of the noble band of Irish missionaries—the saintly Columban.

The close of king Sigebert's career was remarkable. He was the first example among the Anglo-Saxons of a king aban-

doning his great position as a sovereign and entering the cloister. But his end was not that peaceful quiet one of which he dreamed. That defender of the old pagan chiefs, aware of the old skill in war of their cloistered king, Sigebert, appealed to his patriotism, and induced him to leave his cell and to lead their army against the

"THE KING-MONK FELL IN THE ROUT OF HIS OLD EAST ANGLIAN SUBJECTS."

religion of the Northmen, Penda king of Mercia, whose restless ambition and determined opposition to Christianity had made him so long a terror to Northumbria, was resolved to bring his East Anglian kinsmen under his rule; he invaded and harried the eastern counties. The East Anglian dreaded Penda and the Mercian host. He refused to arm himself with his old sword, but with a wooden staff he guided the campaign. It was, however, in vain to strive with the more numerous and powerful Mercian forces, and the king-monk, with his staff in his hand, fell

in the rout of his old East Anglian subjects.

Fursey (Fursæus), the Irish missionary monk, is celebrated, however, among the famous early makers of Christian England for something more than a successful career among a heathen people as a fervid teacher of the better way. "The stranger on the dank marshy shores of the oozy Yare, contemplating the lichen-encrusted ruins of the Roman camp, Burgh Castle or Gariononum, scarcely supposes that those grey walls once enclosed the cell of an anchorite destined to exercise a mighty influence upon the dogma and genius of Roman Christendom. This was the Milesian Scot Fursæus (Fursey), who, received in East Anglia by king Sigebert, there became enwrapped in the trances which disclosed the secrets of the world beyond the grave. . . . Fursæus kindled the spark which . . . occasioned the first of the metrical compositions, from whose combinations centuries later the 'Divina Commedia' of Dante arose."*

To the account of this vision, or rather visions, for he relates what took place in two of these remarkable trances, Bede devoted one of the longest chapters in the third book of his history. He was thought worthy, said our great Anglo-Saxon chronicler, to see a vision from God; from evening till the cock crowed he was permitted to see a choir of angels, and to hear the praises which are sung in heaven; he saw not only the joys of the blessed, but the conflicts of evil spirits for the souls of men who had departed this life. In his trance, when he had been lifted up on high, his angelic guides bade him look back upon the world he had left, and there he saw a mighty fire. They told him it was the fire which would consume the world, the fire which would try every man according to the merits of his work. In this awful fire Fursey was allowed to see the tormented souls of men—of men who were under chastisement, *yet not lost*. Being afterwards restored to the body, for the rest of his life he bore upon his shoulder and jaw the mark of the fire which he had felt in his disembodied soul, the flesh showing what the soul had suffered. Bede concludes his curious recital, of which we have only given a brief summary, with these vivid words—"An ancient brother of our monastery [he is speaking of Jarrow] is still living who is wont to declare that a very sincere and religious man told him that he had *seen* Fursey himself in the province of the East Angles, and heard these visions from his mouth, adding that, though it was in the most sharp winter weather and a hard frost, and the man was sitting in a thin garment when he related it, yet he sweated as if he had been in the greatest heat of summer, either through excessive fear or spiritual consolation."

The visions related by Bede of the Irish Fursey, deservedly honoured as the Apostle of East Anglia, have been dwelt upon at some length here, not because of their literary interest as being the first of similar pieces which suggested the great poem of Dante, but because it was the first recorded legend of those dreams of the night dreamed by Celtic and Saxon recluses, which instigated the members of monastic communities, founded in this period mainly by Celtic (Irish) monks in different parts of

* Palgrave's "Normandy and England."

Europe, to agree upon periodical commemorations enabling them to join in common prayer for the repose of the dead "*under chastisement, but not lost.*" The earliest community which seems to have practised this work of faith and charity were the monks of St. Gall, that great Swiss religious house founded by the well-known companion of Columba, St. Gall, the contemporary and probably the friend of Fursey. The Feast of All Souls, formally instituted in the eleventh century, and the mediæval developments of the doctrine of Purgatory, which was fraught with such momentous consequences in the story of the Reformation, may fairly be referred to those strange visions of the night,* of which the dream of the Irishman Fursey was the earliest and the most remarkable.

After the crushing defeat and the death of Sigebert, a kinsman of the slain monk-king was chosen as the East Anglian king; he possessed the singular name of Anna. As an independent Engle power East Anglia had ceased to exist. But the quiet influence of Felix at Dunwich, and the strange magnetic power of Fursey and his companion, had laid the foundations of Christianity in the eastern counties too firmly to be uprooted by a Mercian harrying, however cruel and devastating; and paganism gradually faded away in these parts altogether. King Anna was a devout Christian, and he is remarkable in the Christian story of England chiefly for the splendid zeal for monasticism shown by the princesses of his house. We shall meet them and their works later on. Anna, who was little more than an under-king in the supremacy of Penda of Mercia,

PENDA'S DOMINIONS.

perished in one of Penda's ceaseless raids in the year 654.

Mercia may be understood generally to include the Midland counties of England. Its conquerors belonged to the Engle stock. It embraced roughly all the country that lies between the Thames, the Humber, and the Severn. But under its supremacy were included large districts mainly inhabited by West Saxon tribes, notably in the south-west parts of Mercia. The exact date of the earlier conquests of the Engles in

*We have already recorded the terrible austerities of these devoted Celtic monks, who carried the practice of fasting to the extent of actual semi-starvation, which too often left them a helpless prey to the pestilences so common in those days. Modern medical science has established that such a state of bodily inanition frequently causes semi-delirious visions of the mind; and it is of interest to trace, as we may perhaps legitimately do, the rise of an error to the ascetic excesses of these saints of the early ages.

the Midlands is uncertain. It was not until the accession of the famous Penda, in 626, that Mercia became a formidable power in the island, and entered into competition with Northumbria for the overlordship of the widely extended Engle

ST. CUTHBERT, WITH HEAD OF OSWALD.
(*St. Mary's, Oxford.*)

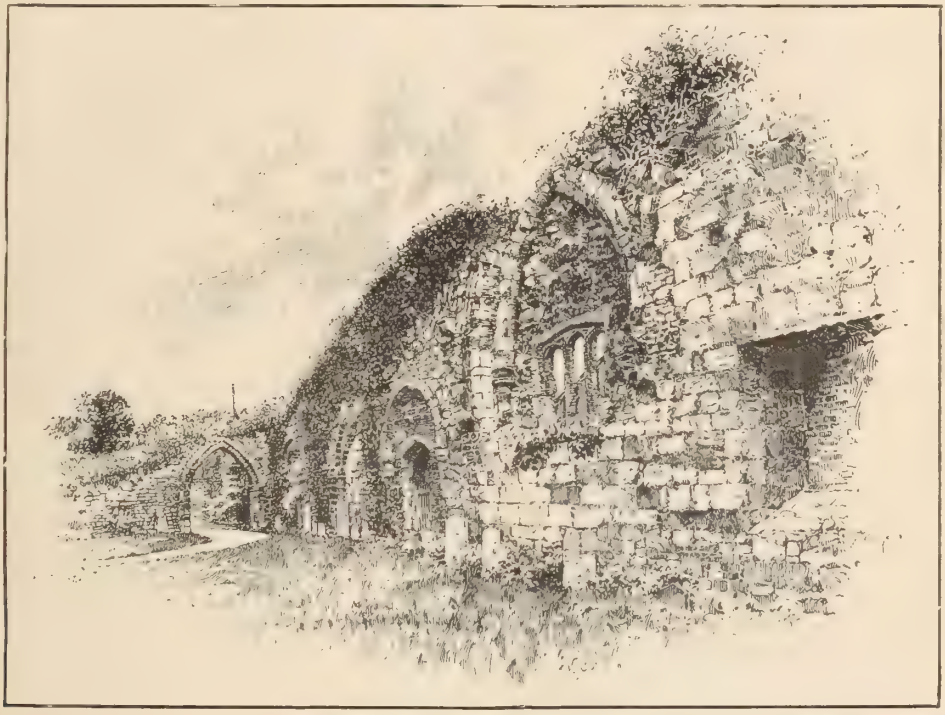
tribes. Penda was already fifty years of age when he became king. His predecessors Crida and Wibba, were kings in Mercia before him, but acknowledged the overlordship, first of Ethelred of Kent, and afterwards of Redwald of East Anglia. Penda was evidently a man of no ordinary genius; he seems to have welded the various Engle tribes of the Midlands into one powerful kingdom, and for thirty years—from 626 to to 655—was the representative champion of the old Northmen's religion in the island. "The prop and sword of heathenism, as he has been styled, his name was long a terror to the inmates of cell and minster in every Christianised district. There is a sort of weird grandeur in the career of one who in his time slew five kings, and who seemed as irresistible as destiny."*

For the first half of the eventful seventh century, while Christianity was gradually making progress—with rapidity in Yorkshire and in the district north of the Humber, slowly in the southern and western counties, fitfully in the eastern portion of the island—the whole of the Midlands remained pagan. No missionary preacher during this period appears to have penetrated into the broad lands ruled over by the iron hand of the heathen Penda. Only in the last years of the old pagan warrior do we discern any signs of change. His son, Peada, whom he had associated with himself in the government, and who, appointed by his father, was reigning about the middle of the century over the Middle Engles as under-king, wished to marry the daughter of the Christian king of Northumbria, and, mainly for love of the princess Alchfleda, adopted the faith of the Northumbrian royal house. This marriage eventually led to the introduction of Christianity into the Midlands, the great division of Britain known as Mercia. Peada brought the Princess Alchfleda into Penda's realm in the year 653.

We now return again to Northumbria, the home of real life and energy in the new Christianity in Britain, and to its noble sovereign, king Oswald. The short

* Prof. Bright.

digression which has interrupted the narrative of the great work of Aidan of Lindisfarne, Oswald's friend, was necessary in order that the progress of the religion of the Cross in the other great Engle and Saxon kingdoms in the island might be related, and the influence which Northumbria exercised in this work of conversion understood. Oswald's beneficent reign of eight years was prematurely brought to a close owing to the bitter jealousy for supremacy between the Northumbrian and Mercian divisions of the great Engle family. As far we can see into that remote age, these jealousies were accentuated by the religious inclinations of the rival houses. Oswald and the Northern Engles had adopted the new religion of Christ as preached with fervour and enthusiasm by Aidan; Penda and the Middle and Western Engles clung with bitter desperation to the gods of their forefathers. Penda preferred Woden to Christ, and constituted himself the champion of the war-god of the pagan Norsemen.



ST. OSWALD'S PRIORY, GLOUCESTER. *Photo: A. H. Pitcher, Gloucester.*

The immediate cause of dispute which led to the fatal war seems to have been the supremacy over East Anglia, which was coveted alike by Oswald and Penda. The two Engle kings, both in their several ways so famous in the annals of this age, met in deadly combat at Maserfield in the year 642; the scene of the battle is a disputed point. It is generally supposed

that the modern town of Oswestry marks the scene of Oswald's defeat and death, and the familiar name of Oswestry—Oswald's tree—still commemorates the beloved Christian hero. The Northumbrian king was outnumbered, and, hemmed in by armed foes, fell, fighting valiantly to the last. Bede lovingly dwells on the beautiful tradition which relates how Oswald died praying for his soldiers falling round him. His last words were: "May God save their souls."

When the mutilated body of the dead king was brought to Penda, the savage worshipper of Woden decreed its further dismemberment. The head and hands were struck off and fixed on stakes, and thus exposed for a whole year, till his brother Oswiu rescued the sad remains. The hero's head was then carried to Lindisfarne and reverently interred by Aidan there; the hands—one of them, the right hand, it will be remembered, had been blessed by St. Aidan after the performance of an extraordinary charitable act—were enshrined in a silver casket and placed in St. Peter's church on the summit of the rock of Bamborough. The "blessed" hand, according to a widespread tradition, remained for centuries white and uncorrupted. The head of the saint-king was disinterred in the year 875, and placed within the coffin of St. Cuthbert. William of Malmesbury relates how in Durham Cathedral the tomb of St. Cuthbert was opened, and the head of Oswald, king and martyr, was found between the saint-bishop's arms. Hence the common representation of St. Oswald, as, for instance, on the north side of the steeple of St. Mary's, Oxford, where St. Cuthbert is represented as holding the head of St. Oswald in his arms. About thirty years after the fight at Maserfield, Osthryd, a queen of the Mercians, wife to a son and successor of Penda, king Ethelred, removed the bones of her uncle—presumably the rest of the hero's remains—to the great Lincolnshire abbey of Bardney.

A romantic story is related by Bede in reference to these sainted relics. When the waggon containing the venerable bones of the great king, sent by queen Osthryd, arrived at Bardney, the monks, still actuated by the old Mercian jealousy of the Northumbrian sovereign, refused to receive the remains; the waggon with its sacred charge was left *outside* the monastery gates. That night the monks saw a pillar of light blazing above the waggon, visible to all the country-side. In the morning, struck by the heavenly portent, they eagerly opened their doors, washed the bones with all reverence, placed them in a loculus, or chest, and hung over the chest the gold and purple banner of the Northumbrian king, which in the days of his power and grandeur had been carried before Oswald.

The hallowed body was not, however, allowed to rest in peace, for in 909 St. Oswald's remains, or at least the "Bardney" portion of them, were brought by Ethelfleda, daughter of Alfred, lady of the Mercians, to Gloucester, where she built a small priory to the memory of Oswald. Traditionally Oswald now sleeps where Ethelfleda laid him, beneath the shadow of the proud cathedral of Gloucester. The spot at Oswestry where the king—to whom the introduction of Celtic Christianity in Britain is mainly

owing—was reported to have fallen, was long the object of many a pious pilgrimage ; and the grass stained with his blood was reputed to be greener and fairer than any other grass.

All this may seem childish—all this reverence exaggerated ; we may wonder now at the number of churches and abbeys named after Oswald ; the respect and regard for long years paid to his name in distant foreign lands may excite our wonder. But this age was the age of the childhood of the great English people ; as yet they were untutored, uncultured, in some respects unspoiled. To the Engle in the days of Oswald and Aidan, Christianity was indeed a revelation with the fresh bloom of God's heaven on it, before it vanished under the touch of men's hands. They saw miracle and sign and portent in the everyday processes of Nature. They felt the Christ of whom Aidan and Oswald told them, around them, about them, ever near them, and they honoured and loved the king who gave them Aidan and the beautiful faith of Christ with a passionate, perhaps with an unreasoning, devotion. But can we find fault with them and their cult of their saintly hero-king ? Such hero-worship surely refines and elevates the people who pay it ; and we, in a different way perhaps from them, shall do well to treasure with a reverent regard the memory of this man, one of the greatest of the makers of England—the memory of the man whom Bede well and truly calls "the loved of God."

The immediate result of the battle of the Maserfield (Oswestry) and the death of the hero-king Oswald, was the supremacy of Penda, king of Mercia, in Britain. East Anglia and the whole of the centre of the island was now directly under the Mercian sway. The power of Kent and its Jutish king was insignificant. Wessex was not united ; and for the time Northumbria, from the Humber to the Forth, was apparently at the mercy of the pagan victor of the Maserfield. It seemed at first as though the cause of Christianity in Britain was doomed, now that its great defender was defeated and slain, now that the formidable champion of the gods of the old Northmen had triumphed so signally. Even the diminished kingdom of Northumbria split into two parts ; the northern division, the old realm of Bernicia, and much of the Scottish lowlands accepting Oswiu, the brother of the slain Oswald, as king ; the southern portion of Deira, which included Yorkshire, choosing as its sovereign Oswin, a kinsman of the fallen Oswald, one of the old royal stock of Deira. The new king was great-nephew of Ælla, the original conqueror of Deira, his father being Osric, the pagan king who had reigned for one disastrous year after the fall of Edwin at Hatfield. Over this southern portion of the once-powerful kingdom of Oswald, Penda exercised for some years the supreme authority, Oswin being little more than his under-king. The north, where the Mercian authority was never acknowledged, year by year Penda harassed by continual and desolating forays. This state of things continued for about eight years (from 642 to 651–2). But, strange to say, Oswald's distracted realm clung all the while firmly to the teaching of the Cross. This was, no doubt, largely owing to the presence and unwearied enthusiasm of

Aidan, who was the personal friend and loved teacher of Oswin, one of the two sovereigns.

At the end of these eight years, Oswiu, the king of the northern portion of Oswald's kingdom, who eventually restored the fallen grandeur and power of Northumbria, treacherously assassinated (651) Oswin of Deira, Aidan's friend, and again united the northern and southern provinces. Already, in the picture of Aidan's life, this dark crime has been alluded to, and the death of the broken-hearted Aidan as the immediate consequence has been related. This murder of the popular and well-loved Deiran king Oswin, is the one dark spot in the brilliant and useful career of Oswiu. No apologist has been found for the northern king here, although historians love to dwell on the splendour and usefulness of the subsequent career of this Oswiu.

The union of Northumbria and the great abilities of its king gradually restored the old influence of the Northern Engles in East Anglia. It was to put an end to this fast-growing influence of the Northern Engles, that king Penda determined to strike a decisive blow, which should crush the rising power of Oswiu and Northumbria. But it was Penda's last effort. The heathen warrior was growing very old. His son and under-king, Peada, had married Oswiu's daughter, the princess Alchfleda, and had embraced Christianity. The pagan influence in the heart of the Mercian country was thus undermined. Nevertheless Penda's array which he led against the Northern Engles was a formidable one — thirty mighty earldomen and thanes rallied round the doughty champion of Woden. But the decisive battle went against him. The words of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle—in their sharp, stern language—tell the story of the great pagan rout tersely but effectively. "In the year 655 king Oswy (Oswiu) slew king Penda at Winwidfield [Winwaed was a small river near Leeds] and thirty men of royal race with him, and some of them were kings, and the Mercians became Christians . . . and Peada (the Christian), the son of Penda, succeeded to the kingdom of the Mercians." A verse of an old battle-song of the conquerors has been preserved to us—

"In the river Winwaed is avenged the slaughter of Anna,
The slaughter of the Kings Sigberht and Ecgrice,
The slaughter of the Kings Oswald and Edwin."*

It was during the last four or five years of Penda's reign that a permanent Christian settlement was established in Essex and Middlesex among the Northmen conquerors known as East Saxons. It is strange that the great capital of the world-wide empire afterwards to be won by these Saxon and Engle peoples, whose early fortunes and slow conversion to Christianity in our island we have been relating—London, fell within the limits of the territory of the most undistinguished of the Northmen invaders. The East Saxon in his narrow territory, well-nigh entirely hemmed in by Jute and Engle, never in this early story of England played an influential part. In the first blush of his early successes, Augustine, with the aid of his faithful

* Anna, Sigberht (Sigebert) and Ecgrice were Christian Kings of East Anglia; Oswald and Edwin were the two well-known Northumbrian monarchs, who fell before Penda at the battles of Hatfield and the Maserfield.

CELTIC MISSIONARY PREACHING.

friend Ethelbert, the Jutish king of Kent, established Mellitus as missionary bishop in Essex and Middlesex, and this early preacher of the faith fixed upon the restored and growing city of London as the seat of his bishopric and the centre of his work. The story of the foundation and first building of St. Paul's and the West Minster, has been told. But dark days for Christianity came quickly on in these parts, and the Christian teachers were rudely driven away by the people and chiefs, who preferred the old faith of their Norsemen ancestors to the new teaching. Mellitus fled, and the Christian colony—large or small, we possess no records which throw any light upon its numbers or its influence—was dispersed. We ask in vain what became of the primitive St. Paul's and the West Minster; for some thirty-six years a cloud of impenetrable darkness rests over the Christian story of Essex and Middlesex.

Once more we find the Engle north of the island busied about this distant province, colonised, too, by a people of a different stock—by Saxons. It seems strange that no record is preserved of any attempts made to re-sow the seeds of the faith in these eastern districts on the part of the neighbouring, Christian Kent, during all these years; no record exists of any effort to pick up the dropped threads of Augustine's work. There seems to have been a lack of missionary zeal in the Roman church of Canterbury, after its first ardour in the days of Augustine had been spent.

The evangelisation of Essex and Middlesex about the middle of this century (the seventh) came about in this wise. It has been related how in the last years of Penda, the pagan Mercian conqueror, his son Peada loved a Christian princess, Alchfleda, daughter of the great Northumbrian Oswiu. Partly, no doubt, for her sake, Peada became a Christian, and determined to introduce his new faith into those South-Engle districts in which lay Bedford and the Trent. From his father-in-law's land, on the advice of Finan, the successor of Aidan at Lindisfarne, four missionaries were chosen to assist Peada's work. One of these, Cedd, an Engle, a monk of Lindisfarne, was a man of singular vigour and tireless enthusiasm, and upon him the choice of Oswiu fell when, about a year later, the East Saxon king Sigebert applied for a missionary teacher to reconvert his people. This king Sigebert, known in the Chronicles as "the good," had contracted a deep friendship and admiration for the great Engle king Oswiu, and used to visit him in the north. It was Oswiu who persuaded Sigebert to become a Christian, and the story relates how this East Saxon king and Penda's son Peada were baptised together in the north somewhere about A.D. 653. The Christian rite was performed by Finan of Lindisfarne at a royal residence of Oswiu, named "At the Wall," near the old Roman wall of Severus, close to Newcastle.

Cedd was subsequently consecrated bishop at Lindisfarne, and set about his work with ardour. His labours of evangelisation were crowned with the success which usually seems to have attended these early Celtic teachers; for Cedd, though an Engle born, was a monk of Lindisfarne, and had been trained carefully in the spirit of the famous schools of Iona

and Ireland. We hear of him ordaining numerous priests and deacons to assist him in preaching and baptising; of his founding many churches and monasteries. The centres of bishop Cedd's activity were Tilaburg, the modern Tilbury on the Thames, and a place now destroyed by the sea, called Ythanceaster, probably the Roman Othonæ. Singularly enough, London, the old site of Mellitus' see, is never mentioned in Cedd's successful work in Essex and Middlesex.

Cedd was in the habit of betaking himself when he could to his old home in the north, no doubt to gather from Finan and other fathers of Lindisfarne, who had known the saintly Aidan, fresh stores of courage and enthusiasm for his hard and difficult task. In one of these visits he received a noble grant of land from Ethelwald, a sub-king of Oswiu, upon which he founded the subsequently famous monastery of Lastingham, between York and Whitby (or Streonashalch) under the Pickering hills.

The close of this successful missionary's life gives one some idea of the passionate love he and men of like spirit with himself were able to breathe into their disciples and pupils. It was years after, apparently in 664, when, on one of his visits to his home of Lastingham and the north, the "Yellow Pest," so called from the ghastly yellow hue which came over the bodies of its victims—one of those fierce and desolating diseases which in that day used to rage at not infrequent intervals over Europe — was slaying its thousands in Britain and Ireland. The missionary bishop just come to Lastingham, wearied with his never-ending work, fell an easy victim to the disease. Thirty of his East Saxon disciples, monks of one of his Essex foundations, hearing of their loved master's death, made all haste to Lastingham; they would at least be near his grave. They soon rejoined him; for only a few days after their arrival at his favourite Yorkshire

OSWIU AND PEADA.

monastery, the whole thirty were swept away by the same dire disease.

This same yellow plague of which Cedd died was especially fatal in the district round the mouth of the Thames, and a great pagan reaction passed over the country where Cedd had preached with so much power and success. King, thane, and people rivalled each other to restore the fallen altar of the offended Woden, hoping thus to ward off the fatal contagion which they regarded as the punishment of the angry gods of the North. But the pagan reaction seems to have been but

temporary, for the work of Cedd had been real, and those districts where he had laboured and taught were Christian at heart.

In Mercia, after the death of Penda, his monastery of Medeshamstede, "the dwelling-place in the meadows," the monastery afterwards known through the length and breadth of Christian England as Peter-

BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW (LINDISFARNE GOSPEL BOOK).

son Peada was continued as under-king to the victorious Oswiu, his father-in-law. One of the Lindisfarne companions of Cedd, Diuma, an Irish Celt, was consecrated as Mercian bishop; and Peada, Diuma, and Oswiu together founded, in 656, the borough. A mysterious crime, however, perpetrated the same year, cut short the career of Peada, the Christian son of Penda. He was murdered, the sad story said, owing to the intrigues of his wife Alchfleda, Oswiu's daughter.

REMAINS OF A CROSS AT WINWICK.
(Commemorating, according to Tradition, the Battle of the Maserfield.)

For about three years after the defeat and death of Penda, the supremacy of Oswiu and Northumbria was generally acknowledged by the Mercian Engles; as long as Peada, the son of Penda—who had embraced Christianity when he married Alchfleda, the daughter of Oswiu—lived, the rule of Northumbria was undisputed throughout the Mercian peoples. But Peada, Oswiu's son-in-law, died three years after the battle of Winwaed; and in A.D. 659 the Mercian Engles openly revolted, drove King Oswiu's thanes from the land, and raised Wulfhere, a younger son of Penda, who had been kept in concealment by the three principal Mercian chiefs, to the throne of his father. Wulfhere proved a most able ruler, and under his government Mercia rapidly obtained a power and influence greater even than it had enjoyed under the heathen Penda. Wulfhere, however, was an earnest Christian like Peada, and in his long reign Christianity gradually became the religion of Mercia.

END OF AN ARM OF THE WINWICK CROSS.
(Conjectured to depict the Death of St. Oswald.)

The Northumbrian Engles seem to have quietly acquiesced in this assertion of Mercian independence; and now for a long period it seems to have been generally accepted as a permanent settlement among the conquerors that Britain should be divided into three great and independent divisions — *Northumbria*, including Yorkshire, in the north; *Mercia*, including East Anglia, in the midland counties; and *Wessex*, after a time including Kent, in the southern and western counties of the conquered island. Thus the north and

midlands—two independent kingdoms—were permanently appropriated by the Engles, the south and west by the Saxons. The whole people became known as the Engle or Anglo-Saxons. Eventually the conquerors of the north and midlands gave their name to the great nation on whose broad empire the sun never sets—Engle-Land—England.

But although Wulfhere, the son of Penda, re-established the independence and restored the power of the Mercian rule over the centre of the island, the Christian work accomplished by Oswiu during the short period of his supremacy in Mercia was never undone. The great Engle chief, like Oswald and others of the Woden-descended race* of Northumbrian kings, was intensely in earnest: his teachers, trained in the schools of Iona and Lindisfarne, did their work thoroughly, and their royal pupils believed in Jesus Christ with an intense earnestness. With splendid devotion did these warrior princes, when once convinced of the truth of the story of the Cross, assist with hand and brain the efforts of the Celtic preachers of the faith. Aided by his son-in-law, Peada (Penda's son), Oswiu, during his three years of Mercian rule, did his part in laying the foundation of Christianity in the midland counties.

The first five bishops of Mercia succeeded each other in tolerably quick succession. They were all trained in Ireland, in Iona, or in Lindisfarne. Their names are treasured still in that fair list of saintly men—the makers of Christian England. The first was that Irish monk, Diuma, whom Prince Peada brought from Northumberland at the time of his marriage with Aichfleda, King Oswiu's daughter. When Diuma died he was followed by another Irishman, Cellach, who was reckoned among the disciples of Columba, coming as he did from Columba's famous house of Iona. After some time of restless labour in Mercia, he resigned his high office and returned to the solemn peace of his loved Iona. The third bishop of Mercia was Trumhere, an Engle by birth, who was consecrated in the year 659. The fourth in succession was Jaruman, who succeeded him in 662, who was followed by Chad, who for some time had ruled the northern church at York—Chad, whom we shall meet again as bishop of Northumbria.

Our sketch has been simply a few rough outlines, for generally an impenetrable mist hangs over the early period of the story of the Mercian Engles, and of the East and West Saxons; Bede, our guide, giving us but few details of the southern and midland kingdoms. But through the mist and the confusion we see enough to assure us that all the Christianity of the Northmen conquerors of Mid and Southern Britain came from Northumbrian missionary preachers; that the centre of Northumbrian religious life was Lindisfarne, that little rocky island off the coast between Bamborough and the modern Berwick; that Lindisfarne looked to Iona and its network of Scottish communities as its guide and religious

* The names of "Woden and Odin" are in popular speech interchangeable; for instance, Montalembert traces the royal Northumbrian genealogy to "Odin." Green styles "Woden" the common god of the whole conquering people, the ancestor of its kings. Sharon Turner says "Odin and Woden" are obviously the same character. The Saxon Chronicle gives "Woden" as the common royal ancestor.

centre ; and that beyond Iona it looked to the flourishing Celtic church in Ireland as its spiritual mother church.

After the battle of the Winwaed, in 655, had been won by Oswiu, the Northumbrian king, all real resistance on the part of the supporters of the old gods of the Northmen was over and done. Between the Firth of Forth and the Humber, Christianity was already a power. Northumbrian missionaries had made a firm lodgment among the Engle peoples of East Anglia, and the East Saxons of Essex and Middlesex. Among the Mercian Engles of the Midland counties under Peada, the Christian son of Penda, the new faith preached by Lindisfarne teachers had been for some time steadily making its way, in spite of the disfavour of the great heathen Penda ; and when Penda was slain in the great battle, the whole of the Mercian peoples and their king became rapidly Christian. In Wessex, including all the southern and western counties, the progress was slower ; but it was still a progress, and Northumbrian teachers gradually made themselves centres whence the new faith was taught. Kent, we know, had received it at an earlier date and in a different form, but Kentish influence was little felt outside the comparatively narrow limits of the Jutish kingdom. Sussex, from various causes, remained the longest outside the pale of Christian influences.

Thus, for sixty years after the island had been won, and the pagan Saxon and Engle firmly established, the work of Christianising the conquerors had been carried on by Augustine and his monks in one corner only of the island ; by Celtic missionary monks with far greater success in the North and East, in the Midlands, and the West. After these sixty years a new Christian influence sprang up, which the historian must take account of. Before the defeat of Penda at Winwaed, in 655, we hear little or nothing—saving in an indirect way—of the influence of *women* in the spread of the new faith among the Northmen conquerors of Britain. But that influence now became very important.

RUINS OF LINDISFARNE PRIORY, HOLY ISLAND.

CHAPTER IX.

HILDA'S HOLY HOUSE AT WHITBY.

Influence of Christianity upon the Position of Women—Marked Devotion of Women to Religion amongst the Anglo-Saxons Their Influence—Hilda and her Ancestry—Her House at Streoneshalch or Whitby—A Double Monastery—Its Power and Influence in England—Other Similar Communities—Hilda's Successor, the Princess Elfleda—Whitby the Birthplace of English Poetry—Cædmon—Legend of the Origin of his Gift of Song—His Religious Poems, Life, and Death—His Successors—Early Saxon Poems—Traces of Female Influence in them—Cult of the Virgin traceable to the same cause.

FROM the first days of Christianity among the believers, women occupied a new position in society. The words and teachings of the Master had accomplished this; and from the morning of the Resurrection we find them the active and intelligent, the daring and tireless assistants of the apostles and leaders of the new faith. In the story of Christianity, nowhere has the influence of women been so marked, perhaps, as in England, in the century which followed the re-introduction of the faith, when the northern conquerors gradually accepted the religion of Jesus, and adopted it in place of the old worship of the war-loving gods of the north. In Britain more than in any other country during this age of construction, of building up of the religion of Jesus, we find women of all classes and orders, of the highest and of the humblest, devoting themselves and their whole lives to what they believed to be the service of God and His Christ.

The royal houses of the several Saxon, Engle, and Jutish tribes were ever regarded by their followers with peculiar respect and reverence, as the direct descendants of their gods. The genealogies of the ruling families of Northumbria, Deira, East Anglia, Mercia, Wessex, and Kent, show in the case of each dynasty how the first conquering chief traced his descent from Woden. That princesses of these royal houses, thus invested in the eyes of their subjects with a peculiar and especial grandeur, should devote themselves with a lifelong self-sacrifice to the service of the religion of the conquered people, should immure themselves in communities wholly devoted to prayer and study, voluntarily giving up all that makes life ordinarily attractive and pleasant, no doubt exercised a most powerful influence among these Northern settlers in our island in favour of the new religion, and materially contributed to the rapid spread of Christianity in the seventh and eighth centuries of our era.

Without hesitation these holy women, not a few of whom were selected as abbesses and prioresses of the communities they elected to join, were accorded a peculiar influence and authority in the state. Their power rivalled, if it did not exceed, the power possessed by the most venerated and respected abbots and bishops. They ranked with these prelates, and were consulted on terms of equality by the kings and thanes of their people. We find these abbesses even taking part in

the deliberations of important national assemblies, and affixing their signatures to the charters granted in such national gatherings. For instance, the 23rd article of the "dooms" or laws of Ina, the king of Wessex, about A.D. 690, sets in certain

notice of her beneficent career: Hilda, the abbess of Whitby, known in her long day of work among her grateful countrymen as "the Mother."

She belonged to the old race of Deiran kings, being the great-grand-daughter of

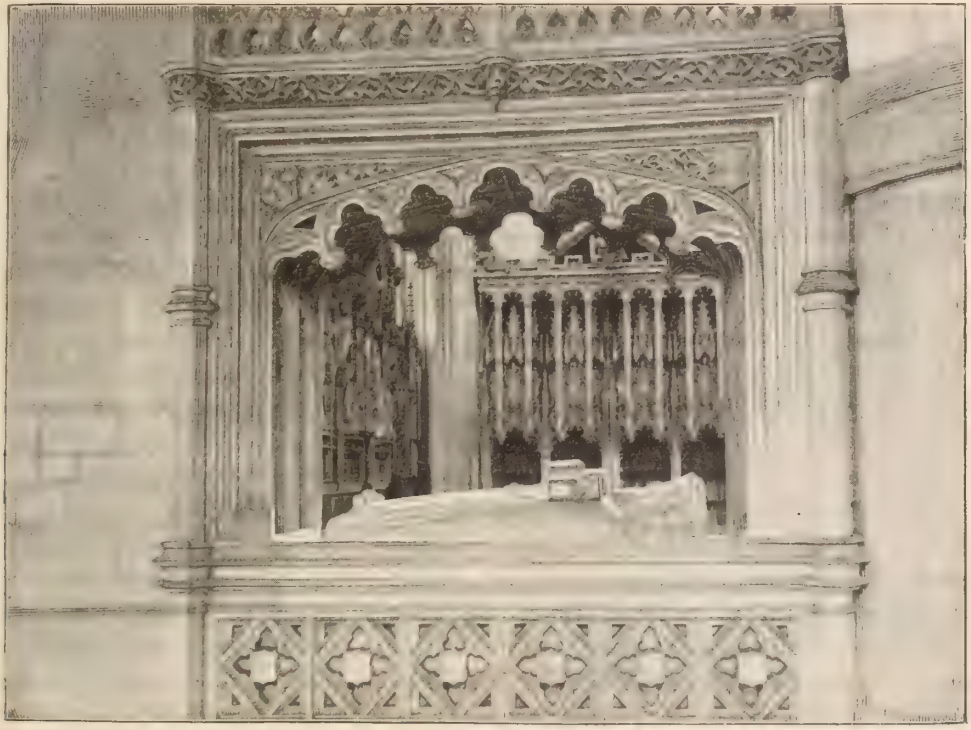


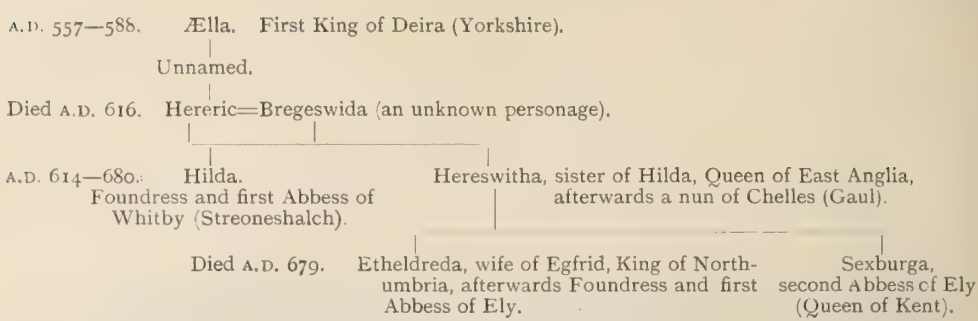
Photo: A. H. Pitcher, Gloucester.

OSRIC'S TOMB, GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL.

points not only abbots, but *abbesses*, on the same level with kings and the greatest personages of the country.

Among the crowd of saintly women who did so much, and who exercised so vast an influence on the religious life of the time in these early days, when Christianity was winning its way among the Northmen conquerors, one stands especially prominent, and deserves a special

Ælla, and the grand-niece of Edwin, the Northumbrian king; and as the royal lines of Ida and Ælla, the kings of Northumbria and Deira, were closely connected by marriages, Hilda was the near relative of the reigning Northumbrian sovereign, Oswiu. Her genealogy, and that of her sister, Hereswitha, queen of East Anglia, mother of the famous Etheldreda of Ely, is as follows:—


A.D. 557—588. Ælla. First King of Deira (Yorkshire).
Unnamed.
Died A.D. 616. Hereric=Bregeswida (an unknown personage).
A.D. 614—680. Hilda. Foundress and first Abbess of Whitby (Streoneshalch).
Hereswitha, sister of Hilda, Queen of East Anglia, afterwards a nun of Chelles (Gaul).
Died A.D. 679. Etheldreda, wife of Egfrid, King of Northumbria, afterwards Foundress and first Abbess of Ely.
Sexburga, second Abbess of Ely (Queen of Kent).

In her early youth Hilda was baptised by Paulinus, the companion of Augustine, somewhile bishop of York, with her granduncle Edwin, the king, at York; but Paulinus does not appear to have exercised any influence over her, for during her whole career her sympathies were evidently with the Celtic church. Bede tells us that for the first thirty-three years of her life she lived very nobly among her family and fellow-citizens. Her widowed sister, Hereswitha, Queen of East Anglia, had betaken herself to Chelles in Gaul, in the Marne country, one of those monasteries for women which in the seventh century were rapidly springing up in different parts of the continent of Europe. Hilda longed to join her sister at Chelles.* But St. Aidan, who was then working with intense zeal and great power in the north, was determined that such a personality as the princess Hilda should not be lost to his beloved Northumbria The great Celtic teacher recognised thus early what a mighty influence for good among her countrymen —still largely Pagan—such a woman might be. He was her guide and friend, and induced her to give up her purpose of becoming a nun with her sister at Chelles.

* The exact date of Hereswitha becoming a nun at Chelles is uncertain. Some believe she took the veil before her husband's death.

In Northumbria an important community of women had already been founded a short time previously at Hartlepool. The abbess of this house, Heiu, resigned her post, and by the desire of Aidan she was replaced by Hilda, who for some years ruled over the Hartlepool nunnery, which is generally reckoned as the earliest among the Engles of these religious homes for women. King Oswiu, after the victory of Winwaed, gave as a thank-offering a rich gift of lands for the establishment of another community. This was the occasion of the foundation of the famous house of Whitby, the ancient name of which was Streoneshalch, at the mouth of the river Esk in Yorkshire. Of this community Hilda became the first abbess. The name "Streoneshalch" puzzles the scholar. Bede gives its meaning as "*sinus fari*" ("the bay of the lighthouse"). Modern scholarship throws doubt on this old explanation, and explains the term as an Anglian expression signifying the "cliff or craig of a settler named Streon."

On the lofty cliff overlooking the Esk as it empties itself into the sea, Hilda erected a church, and monastic buildings for her nuns around it. But the stately and romantic ruins of the abbey of Whitby, which crown the lofty hill now covered with the red-tiled

houses, the delight of modern colourists, belong to an age much later than Hilda's house—five or six centuries later, at least. We must picture to ourselves the first church of the famous Engle monastery of A.D. 657 as a rude wooden structure, framed of split trunks of trees adjusted side by side so as to give a partially smooth wall within, with thatch of straw of rushes, and side-lights only partially secured by a light lattice of split wood. Grouped round the rude church were dwellings for the abbess and her nuns and the servants of the house, including a large hall and kitchen, and further away still from the church a group of buildings, or rather huts, where the monks—for Hilda's house was a double monastery—who belonged to the same community, had their habitation.

The broad lands round the monastery were cultivated by the inmates. Forges, barns, farm buildings of all kinds and various dimensions, all roughly and rudely constructed, alternated with writing and study chambers, made up the religious house presided over by the abbess Hilda. The site was singularly picturesque. The hill of Whitby, on the summit of which was built the church and monastery, is some 300 feet above the sea. On one side is a broad view of the stormy North Sea so familiar to the Engle ; on the other, the eye wanders over uplands, valleys, and vast Yorkshire moors.

Over this rude house of prayer and labour and study, overlooking sea and moorland, Hilda, the Engle princess, ruled some twenty-three years (657-680). Before she passed away her monastery had become a real power in the land ; a famous school for the training of both sexes for the monastic life had been established there. Among a crowd of students, at least five of the more renowned bishops who occupy a great place in the story of the church in the next half century, received their education, or at all events much of their early instruction, at Whitby. One important Church Council was held within its walls. Thither often resorted for counsel from the wise abbess and the inmates of the religious house, kings and queens, saintly bishops, famous teachers from all parts of the island. It became also a favourite place of sepulture. Thither the remains of Edwin, the first Christian king of Northumbria, were eventually translated. There, too, king Oswiu was laid, and probably his queen Eanfleda.

Long before the great abbess died, doubtless the first rude church we have pictured on the hill of Whitby gave place to a statelier and more enduring structure. Northumbrians who had travelled to Rome, and who had seen the beautiful churches of Italy, and their elaborate adornments, men like Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop in the lifetime of Hilda, brought back with them new and nobler ideas of architecture and the ornamentation of sacred buildings. Years before she passed away, the noble church of the monastery of Ripon had been erected, and in the last years of her life the yet more magnificent pile was fast rising of Hexham, which was long regarded as the most stately church on this side the Alps. We hear of stonemasons and other artificers being brought from Gaul to assist in these works of building and adorning. The crafts of glass-making and glazing the windows of the new stone churches, skill in gold

embroidery, the art of gold chasing on the sacred rood, on the chalice, and even on the gorgeous bindings of missals, were introduced about this time into Northumbria. The rude wattled buildings, the low-pitched huts after the pattern of Iona and Lindisfarne, gradually disappeared, and gave place to stately and more enduring piles. So we may well think of the greatest and most famous of the northern homes of prayer, the foundation of Hilda, presenting indeed a very different appearance during the latter years of her life. Not improbably within the sacred enclosure on the hill of Whitby, before the year 680, when she died, there were several churches belonging to the vast community beneath her rule.

It was a scene of extraordinary activity and diligence, this holy house of Whitby under Hilda; not only a retreat for world-wearied men and women, and conscience-stricken sinners anxious to make their peace with God, but a seminary of ecclesiastical learning and discipline, in which a succession of able devoted men and women were reared, who received the inspiration which fitted them for their life's work from the great teacher Hilda.

Religious houses modelled on Whitby, double houses of monks and nuns, arose not only in Northumbria, but in all parts of the island. In the desolate Fen country, in the heart of that wilderness of shallow waters and reedy islets, whose only inhabitants were flocks of screaming wild fowl, Etheldreda, somewhile queen of the Northumbrians, founded the monastery for monks and nuns, on that little hill overlooking the never-ending fens, where in after-days arose the proud minster of Ely. In the west, by the waters of the Severn, in the beautiful West Saxon country, Osric, another offshoot of the royal race of Ida, who in after-days wore the Northumbrian crown, a near kinsman of Hilda, established a similar double community for his sister Kyneburga, which grew into the famous abbey and monastery of Gloucester. Osric, viceroy and afterwards king, sleeps still in the place of honour by the high altar, unforgotten, though some 1,200 years have passed, in that glorious cathedral of Gloucester, which in time replaced his sister Kyneburga's abbey church. Similar double monasteries for monks and nuns, modelled after the pattern of Hilda's house on the hill of Whitby, arose at Barking, at Repton, at Wimborne (at Wimborne the nuns numbered 500), and in other places, where the lady abbess was the acknowledged superior of the whole community of monks as well as of nuns. In all these cases the two sexes were rigidly kept apart. These singular double communities, Celtic in origin, flourished with extraordinary success until their active missionary work was completed, and Christianity was firmly established in the length and breadth of the land.

Bede, who, with his strong feelings in favour of Roman usages, must have disliked intensely the weight which, during the long and bitter disputes between the Roman and Celtic forms of Christianity, the influence and teaching of Hilda naturally gave to the Celtic party, ungrudgingly bears testimony to the noble life and work of the great abbess. He writes how "she taught the spirit of observance of righteousness, piety, chastity, and other virtues, but, most of all, of peace and love; how she lived

IN THE GUEST-HALL (*p.* 171).

after the example of the primitive church; how she obliged those who were under her rule to exercise themselves so diligently in the reading of the Holy Scriptures and in works of righteousness, that many could be easily found there who were fit for the ministry of the Church, to serve at the altar." It was at Whitby, under her and her successor, Elfleda, that Tatfrid and Oftfor, bishops of Mercian Worcester; that Bosa, John of Beverley, and the younger Wilfrid, bishop of York, and Ætla, bishop of Dorchester in Oxfordshire, were trained, with many another of the notable and devoted makers of Christian England. Hither flocked the richest and the poorest of the Northumbrians; in her house were neither riches nor poverty; all was common, as in the far-back golden days of the first Jerusalem church. But under the wise though austere rule of the saintly abbess the sternest discipline existed: from every dweller in that city of saints the most unswerving obedience was exacted.

After the abbess herself, the most notable of the dwellers in the Whitby monastery was the young girl Elfleda, the daughter of Oswiu, the king of the land. The princess, when the victory of Winwaed was won, was just a year old; and her father, after the custom of which we have already had an example, as a thank-offering dedicated her to the conventual life, entrusting the baby princess to his kinswoman Hilda. Hilda accepted the charge, and from that day Elfleda never left her side. She was with her at Hartlepool; she accompanied her to Whitby. During the long years of Hilda's rule there, Elfleda shared her spiritual mother's cares. She was her child, her companion, her confidant; and when Hilda passed to her rest in the bosom of God, she became her successor and abbess of the great monastery. Very nobly she carried on the Mother's work, and the fame of Whitby as a school of all that was good and pure and noble, all through the period of her long rule remained undiminished through the length and breadth of the land. Elfleda, princess and abbess, died in 713.

Strange to say, after Elfleda's death we possess no records of Hilda's house. If any existed, they were destroyed a hundred and fifty years later, in 867 or 870, when we know the Danes wrecked the great monastery. For some 207 years after its ruin by the Danes, the once famed religious house lay desolate. In William Rufus' reign, just before the year 1100, in that great church-building age—that age of expiation for the bitter wrongs done in the Norman conquest—the abbey of Hilda was rebuilt and the monastery refounded, this time for monks only. The contemporary record of the time of Rufus relates how, after the havoc and ruin wrought by the savage Danish invaders in the ninth century, after two centuries of utter neglect, after two hundred years of winter storms and frosts, so massive and enduring had been the early work, that forty shelterless altars and oratories were still remaining, to show how vast had been the extent of the monastery in the days of the old Engle kings, when Hilda and her successors had lived and prayed and worked on that wind-swept hill of Whitby.

We have dwelt at some length on the story of the great Engle monastery of the

seventh century: on its work and influence in Christianising the England of the Northern invaders. It was a notable instance of the influence of these great homes of prayer; but by no means a solitary example. The new England of the northern invader had many another; some of the same size and power, others much smaller and of less importance. But this famous house of Hilda possesses in the many-coloured story of England another title to honour: Whitby was the undoubted birthplace of English poetry.

The story of the birth of English song, told by Bede with his accustomed charm, and with his usual admixture of that supernatural element which the devout mind of this earnest, simple soul saw in every eventful scene in history, is so beautiful and real, and in its main aspects so transparently true, that—as one of our great teachers has told us—it should be the first lesson taught to every child; for "while empires die, poetry lives on, and the story of English song in this land is the foremost of all English stories."

It was somewhere probably between the years 660 and 670—when Hilda's monastery was in its glory, and ranked as perhaps the foremost and most conspicuous of the many homes of prayer and study — that one night, when numerous guests and travellers were reposing at Whitby, and spending the evening in the great guest-hall of Hilda's house, one of the dependents or subordinate officers of the community, who had been supping with, and perhaps attending to the wants of, the stranger-guests, left the guest-hall to avoid the necessity of singing or playing in his turn before the strangers. We can without much difficulty reproduce the scene in the vast hall: its long hearth, in which blazing fires were piled up; the roof with openings through which the smoke escaped; the raised benches at one end for any royal or noble guest, so frequently, we know, resident for a long or short period in Hilda's house; the long line of tables running down the hall for the less-distinguished visitors. For their amusement in the long winter evenings, one or other would recite some stirring patriotic lay, as had been the immemorial custom among the forefathers of the Engle conquerors in their great halls, in Scotland and Denmark; or would chaunt to the harp some deed or achievement worked for the love of Christ.

As the evening passed on, this one of the monastery officers, who was in charge of the stables of the community, where the horses of the many visitors were cared for —fearing lest in his turn he should be summoned to sing—left the guest-hall, as we have related, and betook himself to his stables. When his duties were discharged, Cædmon—for this was the name of the monastery attendant — retired to rest and slept: and as he slept, one came and stood by him, and called him by his name. "Cædmon, sing me something," said the strange visitant. He answered, "I cannot sing, and this is the reason why I left the guest-feast, because I know not what to sing." "Yes; sing to me," said the Presence which stood by his couch. "What song wilt thou have from me?" said Cædmon. "Sing," said the nocturnal visitor, "the beginning of things created." At once the sleeper, conscious of a new power, burst out with a poem never heard

before on mortal lips—a poem in praise of God the Builder of the world. He sang, says Bede, in the deep watches of that memorable night at Whitby, the praise of the Celestial Architect, the power and design of the Creator, the deeds of the Father of Glory, and how He, the Eternal God, built up a home for the sons of men —heaven for their roof, and then the earth.

Cædmon awoke, and lo! it was a dream. But waking, he remembered all the words of his wondrous dream-song—it was a poem at once striking and soul-stirring. To his amazement he found he possessed a new strange power—he was able to go on with his beautiful night-song. At once he went, says our faithful and true chronicler, to the town reeve, one of Hilda's officers, and told him how in the night he had received this new and marvellous gift. The reeve at once led him to the abbess Hilda, and there and then, in the presence of the well-loved and stately Mother, surrounded by her saints and advisers, the herdman told his story, and sang before Hilda and her counsellors the verses he had composed in his dream the night before.

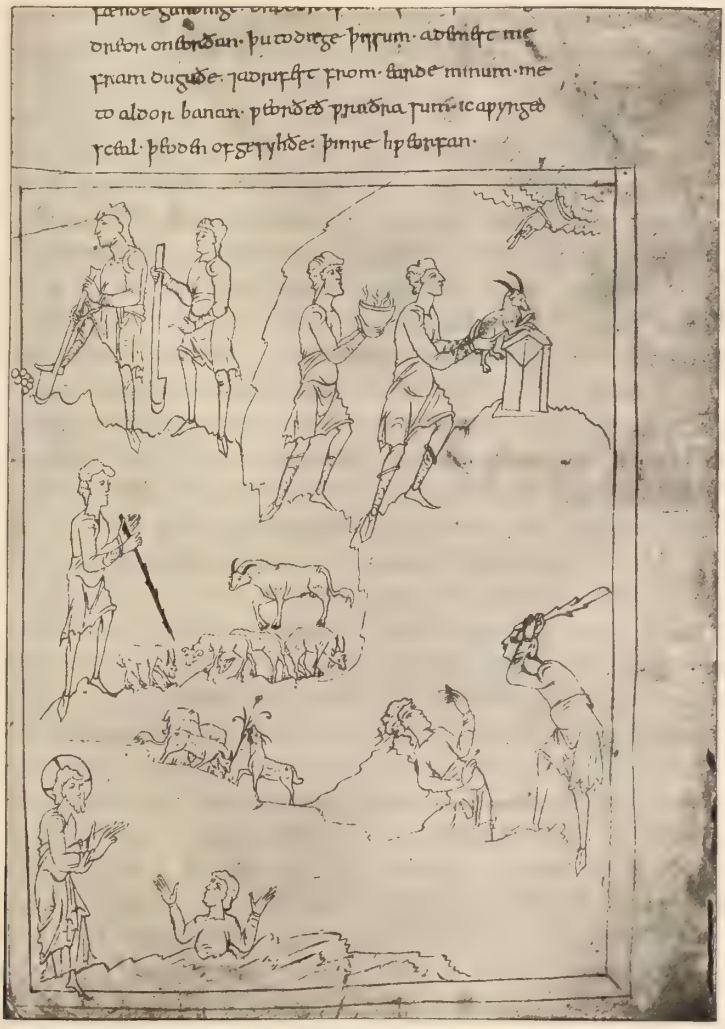
Then Hilda and her attendants told him more of holy history, and bade him turn this also, if he were able, into the melody of song. Cædmon went his way, and the next day brought to them their stories of godly love framed in the beautiful framework of poetry. This was enough. The wise Hilda at once recognised the divine gift in her servant, and began to make much of him, urging him at once to give up his work as a herdman and keeper of the stables, and to take the monastic habit. Cædmon complied, and became one of the Whitby monks. He was forthwith carefully trained in sacred lore, and devoted the remainder of his life to turning into soul-stirring verse the divine recitals of the Scriptures.

The poet-monk lived yet some years, faithful and devoted to Hilda and her house; and in those years sang the creation of the world and the origin of man; the history of Genesis, and the epic of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and their settlement in the land of promise. He sang, too, much concerning our Lord—the story of the Incarnation, the Gospel recitals of the Passion and Resurrection, the marvels of the Ascension, and descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles at Pentecost. Some of these early poems of Cædmon, the monk of Whitby, dwelt, too, on the awful horrors of hell, and on the ineffable sweetness and undreamed-of glories of the heavenly kingdom.

He was a very devout and lovable man, was our first great Engle poet, says his faithful biographer Bede; humble, and subject to the regular discipline of Hilda's monastery; and when he had finished his beautiful songs he brought his calm and peaceful life to a fair end. For when the time of his departure drew near, his weakness grew very slowly on him, yet to the end he was able to speak and even to walk. On the night of his death he went to the infirmary where the sick monks dwelt, and asked that a place might be prepared for him; when it was past midnight, he asked for the holy Eucharist. The bystanders, with whom he had been talking cheerfully, asked him why; "for," they said, "you are not likely to die." "Yes," he replied, "bring

it to me." Before he took it, they heard him say: "I am in charity, my

is not far off," they answered. "Well," murmured Cædmon, "let us wait for that



STORY OF CAIN AND ABEL.

From the Cædmon MS., circa 1010 A.D., *Bodleian Library, Oxford.*

children, with all the servants of God." Then he strengthened himself with the heavenly food, and made ready for the other life. A little later he asked when the brethren would sing "Nocturns." "It

hour." And then seemed to fall asleep, and so died.

"Others after him," says Bede, "tried in the English nation to make religious poems, but none could compare with him;

for he learnt the art of song not from man —not of man came it—but divinely assisted he received that gift. Thus he inspired others to write after him; but his poetry was ever sweet and reverent—no trivial or vain song came from his lips."

Our great Engle monk-historian, who helps us so much in all conceptions of this memorable age, when the Church of England was being slowly but securely built up, with his glowing admiration for the first master of English poetry, perhaps a little under-rates the followers of Cædmon in the divine art; for in good truth they were not to be despised. But to Cædmon undoubtedly belongs the honour of being the first of his school of poets. His successors, as far as we can judge from the few great poems which, after surviving the storm and stress of the awful Danish period of invasions and harryings, have come down to us through the many centuries, were poets deserving also the name, in its highest sense; men who through the mighty gift of song were able to touch men's hearts as only a real poet can. Doubtless their religious works had much influence on the people of their age, and in no small way contributed to the steady growth of Christianity in England.

A few poems—several of them of considerable length—are all that we now possess of this early outburst of song, which began at Whitby under the influence of its great abbess Hilda. The lynx-eyed criticism of our time, as it studies these scanty relics, restricts the absolute work of Cædmon to a portion of one poem, the "Genesis." The other works, such as the "Exodus," "Judith," "Daniel," "Christ and Satan," generally known as the Cædmonian Poems, modern scholars consider to have been written by disciples of Cædmon, and others, who more or less closely adopted his method of writing. "Amongst these there were various simple paraphrasers of the sacred Books, men who sang for the monastery, not for the mead-hall. But there were others who conceived their subject in somewhat a saga fashion, and recited their work to please the warrior, the king, and the thanes as they sat in the hall at their mead. The religious element—for that was evidently the characteristic feature of nearly all the 'songs' of this early seventh and eighth century school of writers—was, however, largely introduced, and the poems—half war, half religion—touching heathendon, not yet by any means extinct among the Engle and Saxon peoples, with one hand, and Christianity with the other, equally excited and instructed the feasters."*

Of these Cædmonic religious song-writers, the names of only two have come down to us: that of Cædmon himself, the Whitby monk, Hilda's friend, the father of the school, and Cynewulf, probably a Northumbrian Engle, an imitator of Cædmon, and one who had evidently drunk deep of the original inspiration of Hilda's monastery. We have several of his works with us still, well known to scholars, such as the "Christ"; the "Elene," the story of the finding the true Cross; the "Juliana," a Christian female confessor in the days of the persecution of Maximian; the "Andreas," the story of St. Andrew; the "Guthlac," the life of the great Fen saint

* Stopford Brooke: "Early English Literature."

and anchorite of Crowland ; and, perhaps the most notable of all, "The Dream of the Rood."

These poems all belong roughly to a period covered by a hundred years. Cædmon died at Whitby before 680; the last —and some think the most beautiful and striking—of these poems, "The Dream of the Rood," was written within a hundred years of the death of the founder of this first English school of poetry. They show us what a strong and powerful hold the religion of Jesus obtained in a marvellously short space of time over the hearts of the conquerors of Britain. These Christian songs, recitals, sagas, poems, in the form we now possess them, treated of the subjects which specially interested these warriors of the Saxon and Engle tribes in their new homes in our island, as they sat in the long winter evenings in their mead-halls. Some of them, of course, were more especially addressed to the dwellers in the many monasteries and nunneries, now plentifully scattered all over a large portion of the conquered island ; but most of them appeal to a very different audience than would commonly be found even in the guest-hall of a religious house.

We shall have very soon to speak of another literature which arose in the island of the conquerors, more especially in the southern districts ; that literature was not, however, English, but Italian. Its language was not the charmed English tongue in which, with comparatively little change during many hundred years, the noblest books in verse and prose the world has ever seen were written ; it was that immemorial Latin—the language of the mighty fallen Empire, which the Church of Rome had adopted as the language of the ritual and the teaching for all the churches, far and near, in its obedience. But in that splendid outburst of English song in Northumbria — that outburst of English poetry which acknowledges the house of Hilda at Whitby as its first home—there was no trace of Italian or Latin elements. It was purely northern in spirit, in imagery, and in language. Its theology—for theology was, after all, its groundwork, and almost its solitary theme —was Catholic, pure and undefiled ; but it was Celtic, not Roman Catholicism. It drew its inspiration from the teaching of the great Irish and Scottish missionaries, men who had been trained in the schools of Iona and Lindisfarne, not of Rome and Canterbury.

In the rare fragments of Cædmon, in the more elaborate songs of Cynewulf, in such poems as the "Judith" and the "Andreas," as the "Christ" and the "Dream of the Rood," the scenery is evidently drawn by men who were specially familiar with the wild and stormy Northern seas, with the wild heather and wolds of Northern countries. Quaint titles belonging only to Northmen are given to Christ, the apostles, the patriarchs, and the prophets. We meet with these strange epithets constantly in these striking and beautiful Engle poems, belonging to the school of Cædmon of Whitby. The old passionate love of the Norseman for the sea, appears again and again ; but it was the wild and storm-pelted sea which raged against the Northumbrian iron-bound coasts, not the blue and sun lit seas which washed the shores of Italy and Syria. The fish and the

birds of the seas of the first English poets belong generally to northern latitudes. The beasts we meet with in these old English songs—although the scene is laid in Eastern countries—are the gaunt wolf which used to roam unhindered in the Yorkshire wolds, and the black raven of the northern moors. A notable passage in the "Exodus," which describes the coming of the Egyptian army to the Red Sea shore, well illustrates this; for the poet paints, in glowing language, the flags flying, the trumpets sounding, the ravens circling above the hosts, the wolves howling on its skirts, the haughty (Egyptian) thanes riding in the van, the king with his standard in front of the thanes; close beside him were his veteran comrades, hoary wolves of war, faithful to their lord.

Yet quainter and more suggestive of the country of these authors, are the titles given to our Lord, and the saints of the New Testament and of Hebrew history. We read, for instance, of the "thanes" of Christ. In the "Genesis" of Cædmon, the angel who comforts Hagar is "a thane in glory." In the "Andreas" the patriarchs and prophets, the martyrs and apostles, are styled the "thanes of God." Andrew and his companions are spoken of as the "thanes of Christ." In the "Christ" of Cynewulf, the "thanes of Christ," highest in heaven, name Mary as the Lady of the angel hosts. In the "Genesis" we hear, too, of "Satan's thanes." Our blessed Lord is described as the Holy One—"the stark-souled Earl." In another place Andrew is represented as calling his master Christ "the Ætheling"; and yet again, Christ appears to Andrew in the

SCENE FROM "THE FALL OF THE REBEL ARCHANGELS."
From the Cædmon MS., circa 1000. A.D., *Bodleian Library, Oxford.*

form of "a young Ætheling" (or Engle noble). In the "Genesis" of Cædmon Abraham is termed the "Ætheling." Abraham, in this strange English word-painting, is described as a "Hebrew earl." The "Exodus" poem calls the elders of Israel round Moses "his earls." In one singular passage in the "Andreas" we come upon the expression, "unknown to me are the earls of elsewhere."

In these poems of Cædmon and his disciples, the influence of Hilda and the great abbesses of that age is most marked. The work of the nunneries, and especially of the double houses, in this period of building up the Church of England was very great. In this beautiful poetry, which took its rise in one of these double monasteries for nuns and monks under the government of Hilda, woman takes an equal place with man. In the "Genesis" poem, the Eve of Cædmon is a nobler conception than the later one of Milton. In a poem whose subject is the "Saviour's Descent into Hell," it is curious to find that the important place among the souls in Hades is given to a woman. It is Eve who tells the story of the Fall to Christ the Deliverer—speaking for Adam and herself. "Our guilt," she says, "was bitterly recompensed; thousands of winters have we wandered in this hot Hell, dreadfully burning." Then Eve stretched out her hands with "O my beloved Lord, born into the world of my daughter, now it is clear that Thou art God." The strange weird poem ends with Christ taking upwards with him Eve and the host of the redeemed.

Not a little of the later exaggerated cult of Mary springs from this new and lofty position taken by women in the Christianity of the new England, largely owing to the noble work done by women like Hilda and Etheldreda, and monasteries like Whitby, in this remarkable age. Indeed, the exaltation of the Virgin, so marked a feature later on in mediæval theology, is very noticeable in some of these early English songs. It is, without doubt, partly traceable to the female influence so potent in the conversion of the Northmen invaders. "The sweet and tender grace, the humility and loving kindness of the Virgin, her maidenhood, her motherhood, became the most vivid and beautiful image that filled the minds of men after the image of Christ. More than half the beginning of Cynewulf's 'Christ' is devoted to her exalting."* The "Juliana" of Cynewulf, one of these early songs, graphically sketches the life of a saintly woman confessor in the days of pagan persecution.

The story of the influence of religious women, and their homes of prayer and work, on the life of England in the seventh and eighth centuries, is not yet complete; but grave events connected with the development of Christianity in our island were taking place in the reign of king Oswiu of Northumbria, about the time when Cædmon began to sing his English songs in Hilda's house at Whitby. To these events we must now turn, as they changed the character of that Church whose history we are relating.

* Stopford Brooke.

CHAPTER X.

THE COUNCIL OF WHITBY. DOWNFALL OF THE CELTIC CHURCH.

Strength and Weakness of the Celtic and Roman Churches—Conflict between them, and its Origin—Queen Eanfleda the head of the Roman Party—Wilfrid, his Early History and Training—Crisis concerning the Date of Easter—The Council of Whitby—Colman and Wilfrid—Oswiu yields to the supposed authority of St. Peter, and virtually destroys the Celtic Church in England—Wilfrid appointed Bishop of Northumbria—Removes the See to York—Refuses English Ordination—Ordained in Gaul—Returns to find his See filled by Chad—Life and Death of Chad—Wilfrid's Work in Mercia and Kent.

ONE of the chief causes of the success of the Celtic missionaries ceased to exist after the decisive battle of Winwaed—A.D. 655. When Penda was slain, all the heathen power of Mercia suddenly collapsed. Up to the year of that famous victory of the Northumbrian king Oswiu, the introduction of Christianity among the Engle and Saxon conquerors had been a hard and painful struggle. In Northumbria, East Anglia, and Wessex, the conquerors clung to the faith of their fathers, being naturally indisposed to listen to the claims of a religion professed by the people whom they had conquered and expelled. The natural human impatience of the restraints imposed by Christianity also pleaded for the retention of paganism, which imposed no such restraints. In the great central district of the island known as Mercia, these feelings were intensified by the attitude of the man who for so long a period had swayed the Mercian peoples—that famous warrior-statesman Penda, who hated everything that was Christian. Penda, during his long and successful career, was the popular hero of the old heathen religion, the recognised champion of paganism.

The Celtic missionaries, men of the stamp of Columba and Aidan, of Fursey and Chad, were eminently fitted for the uphill work of evangelising the pagan Norsemen. The fervour of an Aidan, with his passionate self-devotion, touched the heart of the rough Saxon and Engle warrior in a way the Roman Augustine of Canterbury, with his love of tradition, his zeal for law and order, failed to do. Compared with the teacher of Iona and Lindisfarne, the Roman missionary was seemingly cold and passionless. Hence the success of the Celtic teacher and the comparative failure of the Roman; hence the marvellous progress of Iona and Lindisfarne, and the long, strange "halt" of Canterbury.

But after the decisive Mercian defeat, things were changed in our island; a new chapter in the story of Christianity in Britain was opened. With the death and defeat of Penda, the cause of the supporters of the old Scandinavian religion was lost. Northumbria, the eastern portions of the island, and by far the greater part of the south and west, were already Christian; and when Penda, the old champion of the altars of Thor and Woden, was gone, Mercia—already, no doubt, permeated with Christian ideas—accepted at once the

religion of the Cross. The worship of the idol gods of the north lingered, however, for a few more years after the bloody battle of the Winwaed, in the insignificant dominion of the South Saxons, which was curiously isolated from the other conquests and settlements of the North-folk by the almost trackless district of the Andredsweald, a region of wood and marshland.

Christianity a few years after the death of Penda, when Oswiu was king, about the year 659, had made a firm lodgment in most of the conquered districts of Britain. In Kent and in Northumbria, between the Forth and the Humber, it was very generally the religion of the people. In Wessex and East Anglia it was more slowly but still surely winning its way. The Christian work in Kent, and in Kent alone, had been done by Roman monks. Elsewhere Celtic missionaries of the school of Iona, and later of Lindisfarne, had been the principal agents in preaching the religion of Jesus. After this, however, the work of the church in Britain no longer consisted in the evangelisation of heathen peoples ; the victory of Christianity over paganism was virtually won, and the new Church of the Engle and Saxon land needed to be formally organised. For that totally different work it may perhaps be doubted if the Celtic missionary, with all his enthusiasm and devotion, was equal to the trained ecclesiastic equipped with the tradition and authority and vast experience of an organisation which embraced all the rest of Catholic Christendom. At all events, the decisive struggle between the two schools of Christianity was not long delayed, and shortly afterwards the Celtic church everywhere gave place to the Roman church.

On first thoughts it would seem a hard and unfair lot for this earnest and devoted church that it should everywhere give place to men trained in another and different school of Christian thought. But the Celtic missionaries *had done their work*. As missionaries, as pioneers of a new faith, these Celtic preachers have rarely been

OSWIU'S SUPREMACY.

equalled in the long story of Christianity. But when they had thus laid the foundation, it is easy to see, with the light now afforded us by the divine providence unfolded in history, that another set of men, brought up in quite a different school, were needed to build up the edifice of Christianity. It may indeed be doubted whether, as some writers maintain, the triumph of the church of Aidan must necessarily have resulted in an ecclesiastical chaos like that of Ireland in later times ; since Saxon England was never a prey to

the clan-system, and never possessed the swarm of travelling bishops which apparently was an important factor in that result. Neither can calm historical judgment altogether endorse the statement made by others, that the Celtic form of Christianity was utterly devoid of the power of organisation, which now seemed necessary for the needs of the time. We

THE CREATION OF EVE.
From the Cædmon MS., circa 1000 A.D., *Bodleian Library, Oxford.*

have found already solid proofs to the contrary, and shall further see that up to the very last, until superseded by the power of the State being thrown into the other scale, her works and her triumphs were as striking as ever. Yet the dispassionate historian can still see weighty reasons why the change which was now to take place may well have been ordained by the Eternal Wisdom. It must never be forgotten that the Roman Church, though already corrupted by Grecian philosophy, Eastern asceticism, and pagan superstition, was far more pure in dogma and practice at this period than in a later age. She was the heir and representative of all that had been best in the Roman Empire. She had imbibed not only Rome's great system of law, but the far greater *idea* of law ; and that other genius and faculty of organisation had descended upon her, which had made the Roman world. Later on these gifts were exaggerated and distorted, and in a more advanced period became great evils ; but in that early age they did invaluable work in controlling the tyranny of chieftains who were often both ignorant and savage. She had, further, gathered to herself the culture and learning of the ancient world. These and the other chief fruits of civilisation were at this time mainly preserved by the Roman clergy ; and when we come to dwell upon the scholarship which very soon after this period became the glory of England, we must never forget that it was from Rome and Rome's dependencies the precious materials had to be brought.

Lastly, Rome represented at that time the great body of Christendom ; and however far ecclesiasticism had already departed from truly apostolic doctrine and practice, she represented it not unworthily as compared with the smaller independent church, which was now about to enter upon the final struggle. The triumph of the Celt meant isolation from all this ; the triumph of Rome meant at least, as has been well said, that the English Church "should have a share in any advances which were made by Christendom at large." And the sequel curiously showed that not in England, but in Celtic Ireland, the greatest resistance to the ultimate great Reformation of the Church was found.

THE COMPLETION OF THE ARK.
From the Cædmon MS., circa 1000 A.D., *Bodleian Library, Oxford.*

The change began in Northumbria, in the very citadel of the church of Aidan ; and the first and most important agent

in the great change was Eanfleda, the queen of Oswiu, the Northumbrian king. Eanfleda was a Kentish princess, trained carefully in the Roman school years before by the famous teacher Paulinus, who had accompanied her mother Ethelburga when she left the court of her father Ethelbert to live in Northumbria, where her husband Edwin was king. Her genealogy will show the stock from which she came :—

Ethelbert, King of Kent (Augustine's convert) = Bertha (a Frankish princess from Gaul).

Edwin, King of Northumbria = Ethelburga (afterwards Abbess of Lyminge, near Folkestone, Kent).

Oswiu, King of Northumbria = Eanfleda.

Round queen Eanfleda gathered gradually what may be termed a Roman party, all intensely anxious to introduce Roman customs, rites, liturgical forms, and, above all, Roman discipline and obedience into the Northumbrian church. The queen had with her her Kentish chaplain, trained in the Roman obedience ; and often, no doubt, was visited by an old man known as James the Deacon, the only survivor who had shared in the almost forgotten work of the once famous Roman missionary Paulinus, and whose age and long experience doubtless gave him weight in the counsels of the church.

Eanfleda was also strongly backed up by the influence of Oswiu's eldest son, Alchfrid (from his age it seems probable that Alchfrid was Eanfleda's stepson). Alchfrid had married a daughter of Penda of Mercia, and Oswiu had entrusted him with the government of a province, where he ruled as sub-king. Dying before Oswiu, however, he never succeeded to the throne of Northumbria. But in the momentous period which preceded the famous Church Council of Whitby, when decrees were passed which virtually put an end to the influence of the Celtic church, Alchfrid was still living, and exercising no small weight at the Northumbrian court. The queen, the sub-king Alchfrid, James the Deacon, and others who formed the Roman party, received much help also from a young scholar gradually pressing into the front rank of ecclesiastical personages, and who afterwards, under the name of bishop Wilfrid, became famous throughout the western world.

This Wilfrid, who was born in the year 634, belonged to a noble Engle family. A harsh stepmother rendered his home life unhappy, and at a comparatively early age, under the patronage of queen Eanfleda, who was attached to him when he was still a boy, he became a monk in the famous house of Lindisfarne. In the community he soon became master. His zeal for monasticism, his ardour and great ability in his studies, attracted the attention of his superiors. Strangely enough, in that great Celtic centre of Lindisfarne, under the influence of Aidan himself, with all the traditions of Iona and Ireland around him, young Wilfrid had been drawn insensibly towards the Roman church, of which in after days he became the unwearied and successful

champion. To Wilfrid there was something wanting in the rude simplicity of Lindisfarne and the mission churches. Not improbably his royal friend Eanfleda influenced him here. Under her protection the young monk set out for Rome, a centre which he passionately desired to visit. The first stage of his journey was Canterbury, where the friend of the Kentish princess Eanfleda was naturally warmly welcomed by the Roman monk Honorius, then the archbishop.

Wilfrid left Canterbury accompanied by another young Northumbrian noble, a very few years his senior, who, like Wilfrid, had dedicated his life to "religion," and who was afterwards known as Benedict Biscop, the unwearied religious-art collector, the founder of monasteries, the introducer of Roman architecture, music, and painting into his native Northumbria; a name deservedly held in the highest honour by all in every age who love to worship God in the beauty of holiness. The friendship was thus begun between the two who were destined in so remarkable a manner to influence the Christianity of England.

At Lyons Wilfrid for the first time saw the Roman ritual displayed in all its pomp and stateliness, and the sight no doubt strengthened him in his determination to reform and change the simplicity and baldness, as it seemed to him, of Celtic worship. The heart of the archbishop of Lyons, Aunemund, was won at once by the young, brilliant, and enthusiastic monk, and he invited Wilfrid to stay with him, offering him the richest bribes; but Wilfrid's purpose was to study Christianity in its venerable and immemorial seat at Rome. In Rome he was recognised as an ecclesiastic of the highest promise. Here, at headquarters, he received the utmost kindness and attention; he was instructed in all the mysteries of the Roman policy, and returning again to his friend the archbishop of Lyons, received the Roman tonsure; and, what was most important, completed his studies in Roman traditions and learning.

Wilfrid stayed three years at Lyons, until the violent death of his patron, the archbishop, put an end to this period of his career. He narrowly escaped death himself in the Lyons troubles. He then returned to his native Northumbria, still comparatively young, but with a great reputation for sanctity and learning, and ardent in his desire to introduce the stately ritual of Rome and the elaborate discipline of Lyons and Italy into his own church. He soon attracted the notice of Alchfrid, the sub-king, Oswiu's son. Alchfrid and Wilfrid became devoted friends—their romantic friendship being compared to that of David and Jonathan. The prince and sub-king Alchfrid, the enthusiastic and eloquent monk, thoroughly trained in all the learning and traditions of Italy, with the queen and her court, it may well be conceived formed a powerful party, determined to bring about a sweeping change in Northumbrian Christianity.

The saintly and beloved Aidan had passed away. But something of his spirit had descended on the head of his successor at Lindisfarne, Finan; and under his wise promptings and earnest support, the splendid evangelising work of the Celtic missionaries in Middle and Central Britain went on. The years of Oswiu's reign,

which immediately followed Penda's fall at Winwaed, were years of wonderful activity. No one contemplating that restless, successful missionary zeal could have dreamed that the end of that great church, as the dominant church of Britain, was nigh at hand, and that another spirit would soon inspire English Christianity; that other customs, other rites, a rule and obedience never heard of in Ireland, or Iona, or Lindisfarne, would soon quietly and almost imperceptibly, among English Christians take the place of the traditions of the great Irish home of prayer; would supplant the teaching so deeply rooted in by far the largest portion of the conquered island, the teaching of Columba and Aidan, of Ceadda and Fursey.

WHITBY ABBEY.

The sub-king Alchfrid, Oswiu's son, and Eanfleda, Oswiu's queen, steadily pursued their efforts to bring about a change. The first mutterings of the storm were heard in Ripon, where Alchfrid had founded an important monastery. There the famous Eata, the pupil of Aidan, a monk of old Melrose (Mail-ros), was the first abbot. Among his trusted companions was a young monk named Cuthbert, who afterwards rose to great favour and won enormous popularity among the Northumbrians. Alchfrid had built and richly endowed the Ripon monastery, and, in consequence, thought himself justified in requiring its monks to celebrate Easter at the date fixed by Rome, and also to change their other customs, in which the Celtic church

differed from the Italian line. Eata and his companions stoutly refused to alter any of their rites and practices, hallowed by what they deemed immemorial use; saying that they would, rather than change, give up their new home. Alchfrid took them at their word, and expelled them, and they returned to Melrose. Wilfrid was appointed abbot of Ripon in the room of Eata, and thus began his long connection with Ripon. This high-handed proceeding of Alchfrid took place about the year 661.

Colman, who succeeded Finan as bishop and abbot of Lindisfarne, was wanting in many of those qualities which gave to men of the stamp of Columba and Aidan the magic key of hearts. He seems to have been an upright and righteous man, but was stern and unbending, without tact and wanting in sympathy. Wilfrid, on the other hand, though imperious, possessed very many of those winning qualities which especially belong to leaders of men. The differences between the two churches were growing daily more pronounced, and the jealousy between the Celtic and Roman schools increased with alarming rapidity. But it was the difference between the churches as to the date of keeping Easter, which brought the bitter dispute to a climax.

It seems to us now but a trivial matter, this trifling difference in the Easter date, to have occasioned so serious a schism; but it must be borne in mind that the questions which lay beneath the surface were far graver, and really turned upon the momentous question: were the churches of Britain to acknowledge or not the supreme authority of Rome? The immediate cause which led to the summoning by king Oswiu of the famous Council of Whitby, was the scandal in his own court of his queen and her many followers, including his son Alchfrid, the sub-king, observing strictly the fasting and humiliation of the solemn season preceding the festival of Easter, while the king and his thanes, following the use of the Celtic church in the date for the celebration of the great festival, at the same time would be keeping the great Easter feast with all joy and ceremonial observance. Thus in the same year two distinct Easters would be kept in the same royal household! * To reconcile

* Since the earliest days of Christianity a division in the Church existed as to the proper date for the celebration of Easter. (*a*) The churches of Asia Minor generally followed the custom of the Jews, by placing Easter Day on the fourteenth day of the first lunar month. This use is generally known as the *quarto deciman*, and did not tie Easter Day to Sunday. (*b*) The churches of the West, Palestine, and Egypt fixed Easter Day on the *Sunday* after the fourteenth day of the month nearest the vernal equinox. This date was probably fixed so as to avoid keeping the feast with the Jews. The Council of Nice (A.D. 325) adopted this use, erecting it into a law of the Church. (*c*) The ancient Jewish cycle of eighty-four years had been universally followed to fix this date. But the Alexandrian (Christian) astronomers discovered in this cycle errors in calculation, and induced the Roman Church to adopt a new paschal cycle (*which is now universally received*), and which limits the celebration of Easter to the interval between the 22nd of March and the 24th of April. This *amendment* in the ancient Jewish cycle had not reached the Celtic churches, isolated in the west by the northern invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries. These celebrated Easter always on Sunday, but this Sunday was not always the one kept by the Romish Church after the Alexandrian amendment in A.D. 525. Thus it happened, shortly before the Council of Whitby, that king Oswiu and the Celtic church in his court were *eight days in advance* of Eanfleda the queen and the Roman Church, the king celebrating the Easter feast, while the queen was still commemorating the commencement of the Passion in the services for Palm Sunday.

these painful differences in practice was the ostensible reason for the calling of the Council; but, as has been remarked, the schism between the two Christian schools was aggravated by far deeper grounds of difference. It cannot, however, be too distinctly reiterated that no divergences in fundamental doctrines ever appear to have existed between Rome and Canterbury on the one side, and Iona and Lindisfarne on the other. No grave charge of heresy ever seems to have been urged by Rome against the Celtic teachers in Britain.

The Council was summoned—following the example of the great Eastern councils—by the sovereign lord king Oswiu. The meeting-place determined upon was the great double monastery of the abbess Hilda, of Streoneshalch, on the hill of Whitby. Probably the meeting-place was the guest-hall of the holy house, already described in the story of Cædmon. It must have presented a singular scene, that council of Streoneshalch, or Whitby, held in the spring of the year 664. The discussions were carried on evidently in the presence of a numerous and notable assembly, consisting of the thanes of Northumberland and a number of Engles of a lower degree, who appear to have stood during the debate. A crowd of monks and clergy were also present.

But there was a little group upon whom the eyes of thane and commoner, monk and nun, were bent—a group made up of men and women whose names have come to us down the long stream of centuries as makers of the Church of England, which has exercised for so many eventful years so vast an influence over the fortunes of the great Anglo-Saxon race; an influence which time fails to dim, and whose future influence, to those living in the last decade of the nineteenth century, promises to be more far-reaching than ever. The little group on the daïs or raised platform at one end of the guest-hall of the Whitby house of prayer, included the powerful Engle king Oswiu and his son, the sub-king Alchfrid; the abbess Hilda and the queen Eanfleda; the Celtic bishop of Lindisfarne, Aidan's successor, Colman; the old man James the Deacon, once the companion of the forgotten Paulinus—James the Deacon, who carries our thoughts back to the long-dead Augustine of Canterbury; Agilbert, the Frank, trained in one of the famous Irish schools, somewhile bishop of Dorchester, near Oxford, but afterwards bishop of Paris; Romanus, queen Eanfleda's Kentish chaplain; and the one who became the most famous of them all, the young abbot of Ripon—Wilfrid, the learned and eloquent, the tireless, impassioned advocate of Roman order, and Roman use, and Roman obedience.

The strange and marvellous progress of Christianity in these pagan lands received a wonderful testimony in the general national interest displayed in this memorable assembly. It was thronged by the greatest and noblest, and by many of lower degree of the conquering Engle peoples. It was presided over by the greatest king who had as yet guided their destinies in their newly-conquered home. Only a few years before, the altars of Woden and the pagan gods of the North were the acknowledged centres of Engle worship; and now a great national assembly, under the presidency of a mighty

Woden-descended hero-king, met quietly to discuss points of ritual and order belonging to the Christianity of the old conquered British peoples. All this strange and mighty change had been brought about through the preaching and the devoted lives of a handful of poor Celtic preachers, whose homes were the desolate wind-swept islands of Iona and Lindisfarne!

King Oswiu, the Woden-descended warrior, formally opened this state assembly of his Engle nation by urging the benefits of uniformity of custom among those united in faith, and then he shortly stated the question he had called them together to discuss and to decide: When should the solemn Easter Feast be kept? The king called on Colman, the bishop of Lindisfarne, the successor of Aidan and Finan, the acknowledged chief of the Northumbrian church, to speak and to explain his ritual and practice to the assembled thanes and others.

"My usage," said Bishop Colman, "is what I learnt from the fathers. They and the elders who came before them, like Columba 'of the Cell,' were evidently inspired by the Holy Ghost, and these traced up their usage to John the Apostle."*

Agilbert, bishop of Paris, excused himself on the plea that the Engle tongue was strange to him, and that, if he spoke, his words would have to be repeated by an interpreter, and asked that Wilfrid, the young abbot of Ripon, might take his place. Wilfrid seems to have spoken with great skill and eloquence, if occasionally with some exaggeration. He was evidently master of his subject; his long training in Lyons and Rome had well equipped him for such an argument. "We keep our Easter," he said, "as we have seen it kept at Rome, where the blessed Peter and Paul taught and suffered. We have seen it kept in Italy and Gaul; we know that our time of celebrating it is the unvarying use throughout Christendom; only the Picts and Britons, dwellers in two most remote islands of the ocean, foolishly persist in their opposition in this matter to the rest of the world."

To this bold and somewhat sweeping assertion the bishop of Lindisfarne answered: "It is surely an error to speak of our traditions as foolish, seeing that we only follow the example of that great apostle St. John, who was allowed to lay his head upon our Saviour's breast. Columba, our blessed father, followed this usage of St. John, and taught his disciples to do the same. Could Columba—loved of God—have acted and taught contrary to the divine word?"

Then Wilfrid spoke with great nobleness about the holy Columba. He styled him "our Columba as well as yours." "They no doubt—Columba and his followers—in their pious ignorance loved and served God, but no one was with them to tell them of a more perfect way. Had they only known what we know and you know now, surely they would have followed this

* Though the Celtic church claimed to derive their "uses" from St. John, they were not "quarto decimans," for the Celts celebrated the Festival on a Sunday. The differences in *the dates* no doubt really arose from the Celtic adherence to the Jewish cycle, which had been amended by astronomers.

more perfect way. But, great and good as was Columba, can we for an instant place him before the chief of the Apostles, to whom the Lord was pleased to say, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church . . . I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven'?"

Thus was first definitely advanced, in the history of the English Church, that very same ground for claiming universal obedience which was put forth in the Encyclical of Leo XIII. at the close of the nineteenth century. But the circumstances were very different. Ecclesiastics were giving their own interpretation of documents they alone possessed, and of which no one else was able to question such an interpretation. There was no one to ask for some evidence that Peter ever was at Rome in his life, or had ever consecrated a Roman bishop. There was none with sufficient historical faculty to point out—not even the Celtic bishop Colman—that Peter's own practice could not have been that now advocated, and that the real point at issue was some proof of Apostolic authority, conferred directly upon the Roman See, to enforce upon all, changes in times and customs, which that See might think fitting from time to time to make. The king himself may probably have been glad of any plausible excuse for ending that most deplorable diversity of practice in his own household, which had been the original cause of the Council. At all events, at this juncture king Oswiu interfered, and, turning to the bishop of Lindisfarne, said, "Colman, is it then true that our Lord spake thus to St. Peter?" "It is true, O King," replied the Celtic teacher. "Can you then," went on king Oswiu, "show me a similar authority given to your Columba?" Colman answered in the negative. King Oswiu then—possibly with a smile—speaking to both parties, said, "Then you both agree that the keys of heaven were given to Peter by our Lord?" Colman and Wilfrid both answered "Yes" at the same moment. "Then," replied the king, "my words will be only the echo of yours. I think, like you, he is the gate porter of heaven. I will not dare to oppose him. I will obey him in all things, lest when I reach the doors of heaven, those doors open not to me if I am the enemy of the one who carries the keys."

This quaint, half-playful decision of their king evidently pleased the thanes and the members of the assembly; and, as Bede tells, both those who were seated in the places of honour and those standing round, lifting up their hands as the sign of their approval, adopted without further discussion Oswiu's half-jesting, half-serious conclusion. In this summary way, with a smile probably still playing on his lips, the Engle king in reality put an end for ever to the influence of the Celtic church in England! For, as we shall see, from this day forward another spirit reigned in the Christianity adopted by the Engle and Saxon. The day of Iona and Lindisfarne was past.

Bede gives us a report of this "Easter" discussion at the great Whitby Council at considerable length. He intimates that there was, besides, no small debate on the question of the tonsure, but he gives us no details. There is no doubt that on this and other smaller matters the mind of the assembly generally was made up—the use of Rome must be adopted.

No one was more deeply sensible of the strong current setting now in England against the Celtic school and its teaching, than Colman, bishop and abbot of Lindisfarne. At once he seems to have made his mind up as to his future course. He would resign his crozier as bishop and abbot, betake himself to Iona and to Ireland, the mother of Celtic Christianity, and, with the Irish elders and the abbots and bishops of her mighty monastic homes, take counsel as to the dim and clouded future of the school of Christianity they loved. But to yield to Rome and the Italian uses one jot or tittle, Colman of Lindisfarne, as far as he was concerned, sternly refused. So Colman and many of his monks, carrying some of the bones of their sainted father Aidan, left for ever the wild home which the great Iona teacher had founded and loved so

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well. "What heart," generously writes an eloquent pleader for Roman customs, and a writer who disliked intensely the Celtic school, "is so cold as not to understand, to sympathise, and to journey with him along the Northumbrian coast and over the Scottish mountains, when, bearing homewards the bones of his father Aidan, the proud but vanquished spirit returned to his northern mists, and buried in the sacred isle of Iona his defeat and his unconquerable fidelity to the traditions of his race?"*

The government of the famous Lindisfarne monastery was, at the suggestion of Colman, entrusted to Eata, the pupil of Aidan—the abbot of Melrose—that Eata whom we have seen rudely thrust out from Ripon by Alchfrid, the sub-king, for not adopting the Roman uses. The bishopric of Lindisfarne fell to Tuda, a good man and religious, says Bede, who, though he had been in Ireland, had already, in the matter of the keeping of Easter and the tonsure, conformed to Roman practice. But Tuda soon passed from the scene, a victim of one of those terrible and often-recurring pestilences, which swept over England only a few months after his acceptance of the high office. The same year, A.D. 664, died bishop Cedd, the successful missionary of Essex, at his loved house of Lastingham, as has been already related.

Tuda was the last of the Celtic bishops of Northumbria. His premature death gave a new impulse to the now dominant Roman party. Tuda's selection had been almost a matter of course: for many years he had been acting as coadjutor bishop. But when he passed away the field was open for a new selection. Again the Witan or popular assembly was convoked by king Oswiu. The assembling of the Northumbrian Witan for such a purpose as the election of a bishop, even of so important and vast a see as that which the new bishop would be required to preside over, is very noteworthy from an ecclesiastical point of view, and moreover, shows how vital a matter Christianity and its working had become in the eyes of the newly converted Engle peoples. Such a calling together of the national assembly to elect or to ratify the election of a bishop or archbishop, although not unknown in the history of the Church, is of comparatively rare occurrence.

A general agreement of opinion on the part of the dominant party in the Church—at the head of whom was Alchfrid, Oswiu's son, the sub-king—at once seems to have designated as bishop of the great Northumbrian see, an office which carried with it the virtual headship of the church of the Engles, the winning orator and able advocate who had done so much at the recent Council at Whitby to obtain a complete recognition of the supremacy of the Roman see, and of her right to impose her "uses" upon foreign churches. But although Wilfrid, abbot of Ripon, was thus chosen apparently by the unanimous wish of the king and people to the great office, it will contribute to the understanding of not a few of the events in that great and stormy life if we remember that this election of Wilfrid was viewed by the adherents of the Celtic school in the Northumbrian church—hopelessly defeated but still numerous—with the most intense

* Montalembert: "Monks of the West."

dislike and distrust. It must also be ever remembered that, with all his great powers and splendid earnestness, the disposition of Wilfrid was at once imperious and unyielding. Intensely convinced of the wisdom of the policy of his school of thought, he utterly failed to see the touching beauty and the winning fervour of the Celtic school of Christianity. He was not the man ever to win over others who differed from him, and even many of the leaders of the party of Rome —Rome, which he served with a loyalty that only ended with his life—feared while they admired him. For the moment, however, the murmurings of the men who were attached to the old teaching were hushed, and Wilfrid became the bishop of the whole of the northern Engles.

His first public act was an index to the life-work he had set himself to carry out—the supremacy of Rome. To the mind of Wilfrid the greatness and prosperity of the church were intimately bound up with obedience to one supreme head. Even in his early monastic life among the disciples of Columba and Aidan, when he lived in the rough huts, and prayed in the bare and simple church of Iona, the young student had been powerfully attracted by the thought of the majesty of Rome—of the wisdom and knowledge of the long-descended pontiff, daring to trace his spiritual ancestry up to the martyr Prince of the Apostles himself; as well as by the stately and imposing ritual of which he had heard and read so much, but upon which he had never as yet gazed. When the desire of his heart was accomplished, and he had seen mighty Roman centres like Lyons under a great archbishop, and later, Rome itself and her pontiff; when he had drunk deeply of the wonderful stores of learning and tradition laid up in that marvellous treasure-house, the views and outlooks of his early monastic life were strengthened—possibly enlarged —and he consecrated his life to the work of bringing his own distant and semi-barbarous people into the obedience of this mighty church and her ruler. Then, and then only, Wilfrid felt—as many a really great soul has felt with him—would the church be enabled to discharge her duty to the world. There must—thought Wilfrid—be some great central power to organise and direct, and where necessary to restrain, the mighty forces of the Christian church; and the only power on earth which in his opinion could fulfil this high and difficult function, was Rome.

The newly-chosen bishop of Northumbria made not the least pretence of any desire to conciliate the church of Iona and Lindisfarne. On the contrary, he seems deliberately to have ordered his course of action so as rather to wound and to slight the Celtic school of thought, which had done so noble a work in the evangelisation of Britain. First of all, Lindisfarne, through Wilfrid's influence, had ceased to be the seat of the bishops of Northumbria. Lindisfarne, with all its touching and tender memories of the saintly Aidan and the bands of devoted missionaries who had gone forth from the Holy Island of the northern see, to preach and to teach among the pagan Engles and Saxons; Lindisfarne, whose poor and lowly church had so often echoed with heartfelt thanksgiving for ever new and undreamed-of successes won by her monk-preachers in the broad Engle

countries—ay, and far beyond even the distant Engle boundaries; Lindisfarne, with her never-to-be-forgotten story, was now to be no more the spiritual capital of the land she had won for Christ. *York* was to take her place; York, with her traditions of the vaunted Roman Empire; with her later memory of the failure of Paulinus. But all the traditions which haunted York, though they belonged to a vanished empire and an unsuccessful work, were *Roman;* while the splendid records of Lindisfarne, never to be forgotten by Englishmen, were *Celtic.*

And this was not enough; a yet deeper and more personal affront was still to be launched at the ancient church. Wilfrid declined to be consecrated by any of the bishops of his own country, several of whom have been since venerated as saints. The abbot of Ripon classed them all as schismatics. The arch-see of Canterbury at this moment was apparently vacant, the same yellow pest, above alluded to, having carried off Deus-dedit (Frithona), archbishop of Canterbury, and Tuda of Lindisfarne in the same year (A.D. 664). Wighard, the Saxon monk, was not appointed to the arch-see before 667; and Wighard died at Rome before his consecration. The see of Canterbury was thus vacant.

The strange refusal of Wilfrid to accept consecration at the hands of any of the English bishops, shows, however, *how entirely the Christianity of England was Celtic.* It shows that this determined champion of Rome considered that no bishop of his native country was in full communion with the Holy See. His biographer and friend Eddius attributes to him such language as the following, addressed to Oswiu and his son Alchfrid: "My Lord Kings, I must first of all consider the best means of reaching the episcopate without exposing myself to the reproaches of true Catholics." The king thus addressed allowed his plea, and gave him money and a great train of followers, to enable him to present himself to the Franks with the magnificence ever dear to Wilfrid's heart, and which he deemed suitable, too, for the bishop of so great a kingdom as was Engle Northumbria. These high-handed actions, with which the abbot of Ripon began his famous episcopal career, show how determined he was to uproot the old order of things, and to reduce the whole of Christian England to the obedience of Rome.

At Compiègne, in Gaul, he met his friend who had supported him at the Council of Whitby, Agilbert, somewhile bishop of the East Saxons, but then bishop of Paris. Wilfrid was there consecrated with extraordinary pomp. Twelve bishops assisted at the august ceremony; of such importance was it considered by the Romish party, who dreaded the enormous and ever-active power of Celtic Christianity, then advancing with such rapid strides on the continent of Europe, thanks to the indefatigable work and energy of the pupils of Columban of Luxeuil. The bishop of York was carried through the church of Compiègne, in the midst of the crowd of worshippers, on a golden throne, which was borne by bishops.

Wilfrid, however, was mistaken in thinking that the victory of Rome was already completely won in England, and he prolonged imprudently his stay in Gaul; for on his return to Northumbria he found his

episcopal seat invaded by another, whom Oswiu had appointed bishop in his room. This intruding prelate was the saintly long neglect by Wilfrid of the bishopric. Alchfrid, the sub-king, the loyal friend of Wilfrid, had disappeared from the scene.

FIGURE OF ST. LUKE.

From the Gospel Book of St. Chad, about A.D. 700, *in the Cathedral Library, Lichfield.*

Chad, an Engle by birth, and a former pupil of Aidan. Such a curious and rapid revulsion of feeling on the part of the powerful Northumbrian monarch is attributed by some to the influence of the abbess Hilda, by others simply to the We have no record of his end, but he probably had died during Wilfrid's absence in Gaul.

Chad, one of the saintly makers of our church, who in this curious irregular way, apparently through the simple

appointment of the Engle king,* obtained the great Northumbrian bishopric, was no ordinary man. Utterly devoid of personal ambition, his whole longing seems to have been to win souls to his Master's side. There is no doubt that he disliked Wilfrid, and that his sympathies were entirely on the side of the old Celtic church, in the midst of which he had been trained; yet he seems to have made no strong efforts to reverse the decisions of the Whitby Council. He evidently acquiesced quietly in the Roman use as regards Easter, and adopted without protest the Roman form of tonsure, regarding these changes, involving no doctrinal points, as inevitable. Chad was one of those rare and beautiful characters of whom all men of different parties, and belonging to varied schools, speak with reverence and love. He appears in an eminent degree to have possessed those high and endearing qualities which seem to have been the especial heritage of the great Irish and Celtic saints of this age. Some writers believe that Chad and his saintly brother of whom we have already spoken, the East Saxon bishop and abbot of Lastingham, came originally from Ireland.

While he was bishop of York the labours of Chad were never-ending. Very different from Wilfrid, he cared nothing for pomp or state. His ideal of a great pastor was a Columba or an Aidan, the latter of whom he had known; not a stately bishop of Rome or of Lyons, living with all the magnificence and state of a great earthly prince. Not that men of the stamp of Pope Gregory the Great loved pomp or state for pomp and state's sake, but because from their hearts they believed their Master's cause would be better advanced by His chief servants assuming among men the ensigns of lofty rank and supreme power. But Chad and the Celtic saints chose to do their work in a different way, and they won their strange empire over men's hearts by different instruments. Their churches were of the rudest, simplest construction. Their dwellings were huts of the roughest and most primitive form. Their favourite homes were caves and bee-hive huts, in desolate wind-swept islands like Iona and Lindisfarne; rough groups of wattled dwellings in the forest, like Columban set up in the first instance at Luxeuil, or Guthlac built for himself in the fen lands round Crowland.

Bishop Chad, like his great Irish masters, was an intense student of the Holy Scriptures. These Celtic saints read and mused as they journeyed from place to place among the people. He was ever moving about in his vast diocese: travelling always during his restless life on foot, he was equally at home in the hovel of the serf or in the hall of the thane; and thus he won the love and admiration of uncounted multitudes of the yet half-pagan Engles among whom he lived and moved, and to whom he preached with that passionate fervour and moving eloquence, the peculiar gift of these old Celtic saints; ever the holy man of God, passing amongst his people continually.

We will—anticipating a little the course of events—finish Chad's beautiful life-story, which has left so deep an impression upon the hearts of his fellow-countrymen. The time came when, to secure the peace of the church, he deemed it wise to resign his

* *See* page 196.

great charge in Northumbria. With perfect content he retired for a season to his dead brother's Yorkshire monastery of Lastingham; this was somewhere before the year 669. But he was not suffered to dwell for long in a retirement singularly attractive to the true follower of Columba and Aidan. Largely owing to the influence of his old rival Wilfrid—who, as we shall see, again rose to the highest position in the church, and who with an ungrudging admiration revered Chad's simple earnest piety—Chad was summoned from his retreat to the Mid Engle counties, Mercia; and there, with the assistance of its powerful monarch, Wulfhere, a son of the old heathen Penda, he did a grand work in the evangelisation of the Mid-Engles, still, many of them, pagans in thought and practice. Lichfield, in the centre of England, was his new head-quarters; and in middle England he lived the same hard and devoted life as he had lived in old days in Northumbria.

One of Bede's charming stories is devoted to the last hours of this great and good man. Its scene was a little church surrounded by a group of monastic buildings, where now stands the fair cathedral of Lichfield. Chad had been bishop of Mercia about two years and a half when the end came to his beautiful life. It was no wonder, Bede tells us, that Chad rejoiced to behold the day of his death, or rather the day of the Lord, seeing he had so anxiously prepared for it. It came to the great saint through an attack of one of those desolating pestilences which so often swept in these times over England, and which were so specially fatal to these early evangelists, whose toil-worn frames, spent with labours and watchings and fasting, rendered them sadly unfit to bear up against the pestilence when it seized them. Among the monks who lived with Chad was one named Owini, remarkable for his pure life. This Owini had held high office at the court of the Northumbrian king, Egfrid, the son and successor of Oswiu. He had been the master of the household of his queen, Etheldreda, before that princess took the veil and became the foundress of the monastery of Ely; and when his royal mistress gave up the world, Owini followed her example.

This Owini was no student. At the gates of the secluded monastery of Lastingham, in East Yorkshire, the "House" of the two brothers, Cedd, the bishop of the East Saxons, and the yet more famous Chad of Lichfield, the former courtier and minister of the queen presented himself clad in a plain garment, and carrying an axe and hatchet in his hand, and asked to be admitted into the brotherhood, as he had determined to renounce the world; he said that he would not live an idle life among them, but would labour with his own hands. At Lastingham he became the friend and confidant of Chad, and in his Mercian work, during his residence at Lichfield, this Owini seems ever to have been with the saintly bishop.

In the course of Chad's third year as Mercian bishop, came over the community what Bede styles a mortality sent from heaven: this was one of those often-recurring pestilences we have referred to, known as the yellow or black plague, and which was probably some form of typhus fever. Many of the Lichfield community

sickened and died. While this pestilence was still brooding over Lichfield, one day, when the brethren were in the church, and the bishop, probably sick, was alone in the oratory of his cell, Owini was engaged in some garden work, when he heard of a sudden a sweet unearthly sound as of angelic music coming near; the sounds then seemed to rest over Chad's cell, and then to be issuing from the cell itself. While wondering what this might mean, he saw Chad opening the window of the little cell and beckoning him. The bishop bade him call at once the brethren who were in the church. They came and stood by their beloved master. He charged them to live at peace among themselves and towards all others, and to preserve the rules of regular discipline which he had taught them. Then Chad added, the day of his death was at hand; the brethren went away from their master in sorrow. But Owini immediately went back to his master's cell, and kneeling before him, prayed him to tell him the meaning of that song of joy he had heard coming out of the oratory in the earlier part of the morning. Chad answered him, "If you heard this singing, and knew of the coming of the heavenly company, I charge you in the Lord's name do not speak of it to anyone before my death. The music came from angelic spirits who were sent to speak to me, to tell me of my heavenly reward, which I have for so long earnestly waited, to assure me that in seven days they would return and take me hence away with them." It exactly happened, says our faithful chronicler, as Chad told Owini. He sickened with a languishing distemper, and on the seventh day, after receiving the Holy Communion, died, departing to the joys of heaven.

The death of St. Chad happened in the year 672. For more than twelve centuries the memory of this lovable man and unwearied worker in his Master's cause has been treasured in Lichfield and the Midlands. He was buried in the little church of St. Mary, but his remains were afterwards removed to St. Peter's great church. Bede, who only lived a few years later, describes his shrine as a wooden structure, in the form of a small wooden house, and covered with tapestry.

To return now to Wilfrid. The conduct of the Northumbrian king in thus deposing him, and setting up another bishop in his room, was an act which in Wilfrid's eyes and with his Roman views, must have appeared reactionary and inexcusable; but to the king it probably presented itself in a different aspect. In the light of that declared intention of resistance to Roman authority as such, avowed later on by his third son Aldfrid, it may be that, notwithstanding his first acquiescence in Wilfrid's recourse to Roman ordination, further reflection, aided doubtless by representations from the Celtic party, suggested to Oswiu state reasons for a protest which has been found but too necessary by many successive English sovereigns. It is, moreover, to be remembered that Celtic ideas of a bishop seem to have been more connected with function than with territorial jurisdiction: the great number of Irish Celtic bishops, and their frequent subjection to monastic discipline, has already been recorded. The diocesan idea which we now connect with a

bishopric, seems to have been more or less a distinctively Roman idea: amongst Celts and Saxons, at this time, it rather seems to have been considered that while it belonged to the Church alone to confer spiritual functions, it belonged to the State to appoint where they should be exercised. It will be observed that the succeeding Engle sovereigns seem to have claimed and exercised the same rights of appointing to bishoprics, and that three such saints as Chad, Eata, and Cuthbert, alike appear to have seen nothing improper in obeying the king's mandate. Indeed—and this is still more remarkable—the archbishop Theodore himself, in carrying out his own policy a few years later, seems to have been willing to avail himself of these much looser Celtic ideas. It was an indefinite and transitional period in the history of ecclesiasticism, however, and the precise truth is not easy to ascertain. But there need be no hesitation whatever in admiring the conduct of the deposed bishop on this occasion. Wilfrid accepted his degradation with all the humility and grace of a true saint, and made no resistance. In silence he retired to his monastery of Ripon and quietly pursued his work there, beautifying and enriching that famous house of prayer.

OWINI AT THE MONASTERY (*p.* 195).

He was not, however, allowed long to remain in cloistered seclusion, for Wulfhere, the king of Mercia, and his queen Ermenilda, a Kentish princess, an earnest and devoted Christian, summoned him to

their side to assist in the still further development of Christianity in those districts, occupied by the Midland Engles. There the work prospered greatly, several new monasteries were founded, and paganism gradually disappeared from central England. While quietly working with the Mercian king and queen, Wilfrid was asked by Egbert, king of Kent, to assist in the government of the Kentish church, which at this junction was without a head, Wighard, who had been chosen to sit in the chair of Augustine, in succession to Deus-dedit, having suddenly died at Rome.

For several years, then, while Chad was acting as bishop in Northumbria, Wilfrid worked in the Midlands and the South East, without any settled home save his own monastery of Ripon. At no period of the great churchman's stormy and eventful life did his character show to greater advantage than in these years of misfortune and exile from his own see; when, with silent submission but with unwearied activity and zeal, he did the work which lay ready to his hand, refraining from all interference with Chad, who was also one of the little band of true workers for God, but whom Wilfrid, of course, regarded as an intruder. During this period Wilfrid exercised a vast influence over Wulfhere and Ermenilda, the king and queen of Mercia (Middle England), and Egbert, king of Kent. The result of this influence over the sovereign lords—aided by the power which his own blameless life and restless energy and undoubted eloquence won for him among the people—was the gradual adoption of the Roman use universally throughout Mercia. In Kent, of course, Celtic customs had ever been unknown; there the original work of the Roman Augustine had never been interfered with. In the great Midland monasteries, such as Peterborough, several of which were founded in this period, the Romish use was universal. The Italian tonsure, the date of the Easter festival, and its liturgical uses, became gradually general. The rule of St. Benedict, too, approved and sanctioned by the bishops of Rome, was universally introduced, and gradually seems to have superseded the old Irish and Scottish rule of Iona and Lindisfarne. Indeed, largely owing to the work of Wilfrid, the Roman pattern of church government and order with singular rapidity took the place in England of the Celtic practices introduced by the first generation of missionaries of the faith.

The work of Wilfrid in the Midlands during the period of his exile from his great northern see lasted nearly four years. In the year 669 a great change came over his fortunes, and a new and powerful influence was introduced into England which, though subsequently somewhat antagonistic to Wilfrid's personality, completely consolidated his life-work as regards the great question of Roman supremacy. This new power, which arose in England in the fourth year of Wilfrid's work in Mercia and Kent, came from the arch-see of Canterbury.

CHAPTER XI.

WILFRID AND THEODORE. GROWING POWER OF ROME.

Brief History of the Canterbury See—Choice of Archbishop left to the Pope—Hadrian—Consecration of Theodore to the Archbishopric—His vast Influence in the English Church—Restores Wilfrid to the See of Northumbria, and makes Chad Bishop of Lichfield—Diligence of Wilfrid—His zeal in Building Churches—Lamentable Course with regard to Queen Etheldreda, and consequent Quarrel with King Egfrid—Theodore introduces Parochial Organisation—In concert with Egfrid deposes Wilfrid and divides his Diocese—Wilfrid Appeals to Rome—Work in Friesland—Vindicated at Rome—While at Rome Wilfrid guarantees English Orthodoxy—Imprisoned by Egfrid—On his Release works amongst the South Saxons—Strange Conduct of Archbishop Theodore—Fall of King Egfrid—Reconciliation and Reparation by Theodore—Death of the Archbishop—Wilfrid again Deposed and Banished by Aldfrid, retiring to Lichfield—Council of Nesterfield deciding against him, he Appeals for the second time to Rome—Triumphant Vindication there—Resistance of Aldfrid to the Papal Decree—Reinstated by the Council of the Nidd—Wilfrid's last years—His Work and Character.

SEVENTY-TWO years had passed since the Roman monk Augustine had landed at Ebbsfleet on the Kentish coast, and had established his successful Roman mission at Canterbury, under the protection of the Jutish king Ethelbert and his Frankish queen Bertha. As we have seen, the successful work of Augustine's mission had been almost exclusively confined to the narrow limits of the Jutish kingdom of Kent, in the extreme south-east corner of the island. In recognition of the earlier successes of Augustine, the Roman see had conferred upon their first missionary the dignity of the pall and the lofty rank of archbishop of the English. The dignity and the rank were continued to his successors at Canterbury. But these successors, although possessing lofty sounding titles, were of little weight outside the narrow limits of the Kentish kingdom, and the power of that Kentish kingdom was completely overshadowed by the great Engle supremacy in the North and Midlands, and even by the widely extended though divided rule of the West Saxons, which reached from the confines of Kent to the Severn lands in the west.

The line of the first archbishops of Canterbury was as follows :—

		A D
These five first archbishops were all *Italians*.	Augustine lands at Ebbsfleet	597
	Laurence - - - - - -	605
	Mellitus — Original companions of Augustine - -	619
	Justus - - - - - - -	624
	Honorius, also a Disciple of Pope Gregory, possibly also companion of Augustine -	627
	Deus-dedit, an Anglo-Saxon, whose name originally was Frithona - - - - - -	655
	Wighard, one of the clergy of Deus-dedit, nominated to archbishopric, but died in Rome before consecration -	667
	An interval of some three or four years, during much of which time Wilfrid worked in Kent.	
	Theodore, a Greek of Tarsus	668-9

With the exception of Augustine, during these seventy-two years none of these men were of conspicuous ability. God-fearing, quiet men, they did their work

soberly and unostentatiously, but their influence was little felt outside Kent: another and a stronger spirit was at work which changed Pagan into Christian England. The first five archbishops were Italians; three of them companions of the first great Roman missionary Augustine.

CHURCH OF ST. AUGUSTINE'S MONASTERY, CANTERBURY.
(*To the left is St. Ethelbert's Tower.*)

The fifth, Honorius, if not a companion of Augustine, certainly had been trained in the same Roman school of thought. Bede calls him a disciple of Pope Gregory. When Honorius died, his successor, the Saxon Frithona, a native of Wessex, was chosen. Frithona changed his barbarous name into the Latin "Deus-dedit." His episcopate was in no way remarkable, and when he passed away king Oswiu of Northumbria, whose power seems to have been supreme in the south-east, and king Egbert of Kent, agreed to nominate Wighard, a Canterbury monk, to the vacant see. Wilfrid had already demurred as to the position of the English bishops. So it was agreed that to silence opposition Wighard should proceed to Rome and be consecrated there. But he died almost directly after his coming to Rome. The two kings, Oswiu and Egbert, therefore agreed to leave the appointment of the archbishop of Canterbury to the Roman bishop known in history as Pope Vitalian.

The choice fell upon one Hadrian, an African by birth, a man of vast learning, abbot of a monastery near Naples. Hadrian, however, declined positively the high office; but although he never filled the

chair of Augustine, he still exercised the highest influence in the development of the English church. It was on the strong recommendation of Hadrian that Theodore, Tarsus in Cilicia. He too, like his friend Hadrian, was a man of profound learning and of the highest reputation, his knowledge being so extensive and various,

TWELVE SCENES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.
(*From a Latin Gospel Book of the Seventh Century* Illustrations probably added later.*)

a very great name indeed in the history of the Church of England, was finally chosen by the bishop of Rome to be archbishop of Canterbury. Theodore was an Asiatic Greek, being a native of St. Paul's city of that he was known among his contemporaries as "The Philosopher."

Thanks to the policy of the Northumbrian king Oswiu, whose supremacy over a large portion of England during most of his long reign was more or less acknowledged, the shadowy pretension of the archbishops of Canterbury to spiritual

* From the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. It belonged to St. Augustine's Monastery in the ninth or tenth century.

authority over all the conquered portions of the island became a reality; and the tact and splendid abilities of the new archbishop did much to advance and then to maintain these lofty pretensions. Wilfrid had done great things in Northumbria and Mercia; and during the years of his rise to reputation and power, during the years of his rule at York, and subsequently during his exile in Mercia, had helped to accustom men's minds to the idea of the awful authority of Rome; and the archbishops of Canterbury were the accredited ministers, the official lieutenants of the Roman see. But great as was Theodore's success in consolidating the church in England into the Church of England, and in establishing the principle of the Roman obedience from the Forth to the English Channel, it is not too much to say that he could never have done this had not Wilfrid gone beforehand as Rome's pioneer. Theodore virtually consolidated Wilfrid's successful work.

The Greek monk, who was so strangely promoted to the metropolitan see of this country at a comparatively advanced age (he was sixty-seven years old when he began his English work), may with truth be considered to have been the founder of the Church of England. Before Theodore, a few great bishops perfectly independent one of another, with a certain number of important monasteries and nunneries, made up—with the Christian population—the church in the island; after Theodore these scattered units were welded into one Church, owing obedience to Canterbury, and through Canterbury acknowledging a sort of obedience to Rome, whose rites they adopted and whose usages they followed.

Pope Vitalian, who at that time was the ruler of the Roman see, in accordance with Oswiu's and Egbert's request, appointed Theodore, the Greek, to Canterbury, but made it a condition that Theodore should be accompanied by Hadrian, whom he had in the first place nominated to the chair of Augustine, but who had refused the dignity. The reason of Pope Vitalian insisting upon this condition, was to safeguard English Christianity. The truth evidently was, that while at Rome Theodore's vast practical ability and indomitable will in organising was recognised, some doubt existed at headquarters as to his perfect orthodoxy. Bede's cautious words deserve to be quoted. Hadrian was appointed as his permanent counsellor—he was, too, his dearest friend—"that he might take special care that Theodore, after the custom of the Greeks, should not introduce anything contrary to the true faith into the Church where he presided." This somewhat mysterious allusion is cleared up when we remember that the Monothelite controversy,* really a contest for life and death to the Catholic Church, because it involved the reality of our Lord's willing self-sacrifice, had been troubling Christendom for more than thirty years. Many of the Eastern or Greek Christians had been mixed up with this really fatal heresy, and Pope Vitalian and his advisers evidently suspected that Theodore, the archbishop-elect, had some leanings in this direction, and needed the constant presence and loving counsels of a great teacher to keep him in this particular in the paths of orthodoxy.

Theodore gladly accepted the companion-

* See page 214.

ship of his friend Hadrian; who proved himself eventually worthy of the confidence of Rome, and, as the archbishop's right hand and adviser in theology and learning, raised the Church of England, during Theodore's wise rule, to an undreamed-of position as a great Catholic teaching centre. Theodore and Hadrian were accompanied to England by the Northumbrian scholar, Benedict Biscop, whom we have met with before as Wilfrid's friend and companion in early life, and whose special work in his native country will come before us presently.

It was not till May, 669, that the grand old man, as he has been well styled by his biographer, took his seat in the basilica of Augustine in Canterbury—a great and memorable day for the Church of England, which during his unexpectedly long episcopate he was so wisely to organise and to strengthen. Benedict Biscop was appointed temporarily abbot of the great Canterbury monastery, a position, however, which he shortly afterwards vacated in favour of Hadrian.

Archbishop Theodore's first important work in England was to investigate the curious position held by Chad, who for some three years had been acting as bishop of the vast northern see of York, to which Wilfrid had been lawfully appointed and canonically consecrated in the august ceremony, already related, at Compiègne. There seemed no doubt but that Chad was an intruder, and the archbishop plainly gave to him his opinion as to the transaction. Chad at once offered to resign his great office. With all humility, he told Theodore "he never deemed himself worthy of it; but that at his monarch's bidding he had accepted it, considering it was his duty to obey him."* Theodore was moved at the exceeding gentleness and piety of the man, and even appeared to waver in his judgment as to the propriety of Chad's retaining possession of the see of York; but Chad was only too eager to free himself from a burden he had never desired, and retired to the quiet seclusion of his dead brother's monastery at Lastingham, in East Yorkshire. Wilfrid at once returned, and without opposition took possession of the vacant chair of the great northern bishopric. The gentle, holy Chad, however, was not long allowed to remain in his loved retreat at Lastingham; for, at the instance of Wilfrid—who, in spite of all that had gone before, admired his saintly rival with a real admiration, an admiration that not improbably had induced his silent acquiescence when Chad took his place at York—Chad was summoned to Wilfrid's work in Mercia and Middle England.

Chad, for peace sake, and for the sake of preserving the unity of the church, submitted at Theodore's request to a fresh ordination, and subsequently to a renewed episcopal consecration, and some three years later, in 672, closed his beautiful life as bishop of Lichfield, as we have related already.

Wilfrid, now reinstated in York, A.D. 669, occupied at length a proud and undisputed position in the church of his native island. For the next nine or ten years the main interest in the story of the church clusters round the two, Theodore

* Attention has already been drawn (p. 196) to the probable difference between Celtic and Roman ideas regarding a bishopric and its functions.

and Wilfrid—Theodore in the South and the Midlands, Wilfrid in the North of England and Lowlands of Scotland. The two eminent prelates worked generally independently one of the other. Both of them, however, were devoted adherents of Rome—her customs, ways of government, and order. Outwardly, at all events, there was no jealousy, or even the appearance of rivalry between these two great makers of the Church of England. At the Synod, often called the Council of Hertford, held by Theodore in 673, Wilfrid did not appear, but was only represented by delegates.

This Synod is memorable not by reason of its debates or resolutions, which were curiously uninteresting — but because it was the first of all national gatherings, and formally united the national churches into an ecclesiastical province. Thus the Church of England is older than the English monarchy, for there was a united Church of England embracing the whole population—Jute, Angle, Saxon—a century before the general supremacy of king Egbert of Wessex. "Theodore," writes Bede, "was the first archbishop whom all the English churches obeyed."

Present at this Hertford Synod of Theodore's, besides Wilfrid's delegates, were four other bishops—Bisi, of East Anglia; Putta, of Rochester; Leutherius, of the West Saxons; and Winfrid, of the Mercians; and probably many church teachers who were not bishops. Nine resolutions or canons were passed. No. 1, a repetition of the agreement as to keeping Easter. Nos. 2, 6, 8, contained regulations as to the separate jurisdiction of bishops. It would seem that there was some laxity in the claims of bishops to perform sacerdotal functions in dioceses entrusted to brother bishops. These canons also dealt with certain ill-advised claims to superiority of rank now and then claimed by certain prelates over their brother bishops. Nos. 4 and 5 forbade monks and clerics roaming about at their pleasure; such were not to be received without the commendatory letter of the prelate of their own diocese. No. 3 asserted the independence of monasteries from vexatious episcopal interference. No. 10 maintained the sanctity of marriage among laymen. No. 7 ordered that the synod should meet at stated intervals. No. 9 treated of the increase of the episcopate; this canon—the most important of all—was, however, withdrawn for the time.

The second provincial Synod was held under the presidency of archbishop Theodore some seven years later, in 680, at Hatfield in Hertfordshire, "in order to certify the Pope as to the orthodoxy of the church under his (Theodore's) rule, and so to add to the testimony of the Western Churches, now to be brought to bear on the East."* The names of the bishops who attended this early Synod do not appear, but other teachers, as at Hertford, besides bishops, appear to have been present. John, the precentor, is specified as commissary from the Bishop of Rome. The decrees of the Hatfield Synod under Theodore are important, in that they define positively the faith of the English Church, from which, in the more important particulars therein defined, it has never swerved. The record of the Council, A.D. 680, declares that its members, firmly

* Professor Bright: "Early English Church."

adhering to the teaching delivered by Christ to His original disciples, to the creed of the holy (Nicene) fathers . . . . confessed the Holy Trinity, that is, the anything: glorifying God the Father without beginning, and His Only-begotten Son, begotten of the Father before the ages, and the Holy Spirit proceeding ineffably

WILFRID IN STATE (*p.* 207).

One God in Three Consubstantial Subsistences or Persons of equal glory and honour; it acknowledged the five Councils and the Lateran Council held in the time of the blessed Pope Martin. "And we glorify our Lord Jesus even as they glorified Him, neither adding nor taking away [*inenarrabiliter*] from the Father and the Son [*et Filio*]." We have here a plain assertion of the double procession of the Holy Spirit, which was originally a gloss introduced into the Constantinople recension of the creed of Nice, by the great Spanish Councils of Toledo in the sixth and seventh

centuries, intended to strike at Visigothic Arianism by emphasising the doctrine of a co-equal and consubstantial Son. The theological language of St. Augustine contains explicit assertions to the same effect.*

In the year 670 Oswiu's glorious and lengthy reign was closed. After an interval of some years his remains were claimed by his daughter, Eanfleda, the pupil of Hilda, and her successor as abbess; and the illustrious Engle king was laid to sleep in the famous Whitby abbey which he had founded. There, by the side of king Edwin, and with many other royal and distinguished dead, king Oswiu still rests beneath the grass-grown floor of perhaps the most striking ruined abbey in England.

His son and successor, Egfrid, for a long season continued the friendship of his father Oswiu with Wilfrid. These nine years were the most successful and brilliant of Wilfrid's eventful career. His biographer and dear friend, Eddius, gives us many details of his work-filled, restless career. He tells us of his severe, austere life; of his nights passed in prayer; of his days often spent in studying the Holy Scriptures. Different from some of the mediæval saints, Eddius relates how he washed from head to foot every night in cold but consecrated water, and persevered in the custom until far advanced in age, when the Pope, fearing for his health, forbade him to continue the practice. His immense diocese, which stretched from the Humber to the Clyde, he constantly traversed, multiplying priests and deacons for the new parishes which were everywhere formed; travelling, now on foot, now on horseback, in all weathers and in all seasons, baptising, preaching, confirming; everywhere, it is related, gathering round him eager crowds longing to hear his eloquent, fervid words, and to receive the blessed Sacraments at his hands. Monastic communities were multiplied, and at these schools were established, and to them resorted the children of the noblest rank, entrusted to Wilfrid's care to be trained for the secular as well as for the purely religious life.

In his monasteries Wilfrid was especially anxious to introduce and to cultivate music and singing, recognising how powerful an aid to devotion was sweet and solemn music. Under his wise care Northumbria became a great and renowned centre of sacred song, rivalling here the yet more celebrated school of Canterbury under Theodore and Hadrian. Like many other eminent churchmen, Wilfrid was also a great builder. From his early days in the rough, wattle-built huts of Lindisfarne, he had dreamed of stately homes of prayer with which he longed to replace the low wooden churches of the Iona and Lindisfarne teachers; and now in his day of power he reproduced as well as he was able some of those noble churches and basilicas he had gazed upon with awe and admiration in Roman Italy, in Lyons and southern Gaul. Masons, glaziers, painters, were ever in the train of the unwearied bishop of the north. The church of York was one of his earliest works. The first church of Edwin and Oswald had fallen into sad decay. Under Wilfrid's care a new roof of lead covered the minster; the windows were for the first time glazed, so

* Compare Professor Bright: "Early English Church," chap. xi.

that the birds could no longer fly in and out; the walls were carefully plastered, and the altar was decorated.

On his own Ripon he bestowed the most devoted attention. Eddius speaks with rapture of the noble basilica erected there. Nothing in England had yet been seen to compare with its lofty porches and its columns of polished stone. On the day of its consecration king Egfrid and the leading thanes of Northumbria, with a great concourse, came together, and in their presence, with much pomp and ceremony, the bishop of York dedicated the church to St. Peter, vesting the altar with precious coverings of purple and gold. Upon the altar thus vested, Wilfrid laid the far-famed Book of the Gospels which he had prepared. This magnificent copy of the Gospels was written on purple vellum with letters of gold; the binding was of plates of gold encrusted with precious gems.

ST. WILFRID'S NEEDLE, RIPON CATHEDRAL.

Yet more magnificent even than his church of Ripon, was the abbey of Hexham, where Wilfrid had founded a great monastery on lands given to him by the queen of Egfrid, Etheldreda, afterwards foundress and first abbess of Ely. The Hexham abbey was dedicated to St. Andrew, in memory of that church so dear to Wilfrid and the lovers of the Roman school, whence came Augustine and his first little band of missionaries. Hexham Abbey, with its deep-dug foundations, its vast crypt, its porches and pillars, its spiral staircases and galleries, its lofty and imposing spires, for two centuries after its completion by Wilfrid and his architect, was looked upon as the most beautiful and stately house of God on this side of the Alps. This wonderful church, with all its accumulated art treasures, such as reliquaries, shrines, books, was sacked and burned by the Danes in 875, some two hundred years later.

Thus Wilfrid's power and influence grew. At times he seemed to throw aside the simplicity and homeliness with which he won so many hearts among even the lowest of the people, and appeared abroad escorted by a train, dressed and armed with all the splendour of royal guards; no doubt thinking that such appearances in public would impress men's minds with a sense of the grandeur of a church whose chief

minister was thus honoured. Some think, and perhaps rightly, that such display stirred up envy and evil speaking, and may have deeply offended the king, who was gradually alienated from the great bishop. But there was a deeper and more direct cause of the enmity which, after this long period of noble work, separated the Northumbrian monarch from Wilfrid.

Etheldreda, the queen of Egfrid, a daughter of Anna, the East Saxon king, was famed for her great beauty. In her youth she loved dress and ornaments, and years after, when dying as abbess of Ely, famed far and wide for her sanctity, alluding to a painful tumour in her neck from which she was suffering, said to the bystanders, "I believe now I am enduring this pain that I may be absolved from the guilt of my thoughtless levity in the days of my youth, having now this swelling and burning on my neck instead of the gold and precious stones which once used to adorn it." The passion for a cloistered life, so common in these days among the great ones of the earth, especially among women, took possession of the Northumbrian queen; and led to a deplorable domestic tragedy, which further caused an adulterous marriage and a war.* She desired to leave her brilliant court and her husband, and dedicate her life to what, according to the strange ideal sedulously promoted by ecclesiastical exhortation, was considered "religion." Egfrid, who loved her tenderly, was bitterly opposed to her wish, and summoned the all-powerful bishop Wilfrid to influence the queen to remain with him. Etheldreda, however, remained steadfast to her resolve, and Wilfrid was suspected, probably with good cause, of abetting the queen's purpose. She fled from the court and took the veil at the hands of Wilfrid at the great double monastery of Coldingham, of which house the princess Ebba, the aunt of Egfrid, was abbess.

The king pursued her thither, and the wanderings of Etheldreda as she fled from her husband have formed the subject of a curious legendary romance. In the end, in her own East Anglian land the queen found a refuge; and there, on the low rising ground above the desolate fens, she founded the famous double house of Ely on the spot where the stately cathedral of Ely now stands. But the important share which Wilfrid took in the transaction, for ever made a hopeless breach between him and king Egfrid; and from this day may be said to have commenced the celebrated misfortunes of the bishop.

During the nine years of Wilfrid's splendid work in Northumbria, in the midlands and southern districts of England Theodore and Hadrian, the two old men, the one from the East, the other from North Africa, the faithful lieutenants of Rome, had also been working unwearyingly, with a large measure of success. The two journeyed unceasingly together through the vast dioceses of the southern and midland districts, organising the church, correcting abuses, preaching and teaching, careful everywhere to enforce the Roman customs, especially the Roman use in the matter of the date of Easter. We can even trace their presence in Wilfrid's diocese as far

* Green traces the war between Egfrid and Wulfhere, partly to the shelter given by the latter to queen Etheldreda.

as Lindisfarne ; for there is no doubt but that Theodore, although interfering but little in this period with the great northern bishop, regarded himself, and was regarded even by Wilfrid, as metropolitan, and, in a sense, the supreme ecclesiastic in England.

It is to archbishop Theodore and Hadrian, of the kingdoms or sub-kingdoms into which the conquered island was divided ; for instance, the vast Engle division of Northumbria, stretching from the Humber to the Clyde, formed one huge bishopric ; Mercia, the other great Engle division, including all the Midlands, formed another

ETHELDREDA TAKING THE VEIL.

especially in the south and midlands, that the commencement of parochial organisation is traced. Many churches were built in this time ; and in not a few instances resident priests, not attached to any monastic community, were appointed to take charge of them. It is to Theodore also that an increase of the episcopate is owing. Hitherto only a very few bishops had been appointed—usually one bishop taking the oversight of the church in each ecclesiastical province ; East Anglia, again, constituted another ; Wessex and Kent each had their solitary chief pastor. With such men as Wilfrid in Northumbria and Chad in Mercia, prelates of such distinguished ability and possessing such varied gifts, any distribution of their dioceses would have been a difficult if not a hopeless task. But when Chad died in A.D. 672, and some six years later Wilfrid incurred the bitter enmity of the

Northumbrian king, Egfrid, Theodore was able to split up the large division of Northumbria. In other parts of England his task of sub-division was easier, where there were no prelates of the commanding talents of Chad and Wilfrid.

We possess an abiding monument of the zeal and industry of these two aged men, in the well-known collection of moral and penal institutes known as the Penitentials of Theodore — "Liber Pœnitentialis." This work was drawn up by some priest from Theodore's oral answers to questions concerning discipline. It was the first book of the kind published by authority in the western church, and was the foundation of all the other similar collections — "libelli pœnitentiales" in England. This work, and Theodore and Hadrian's renowned school set up at Canterbury in St. Augustine's Monastery there, spread the reputation of the English archbishop for ecclesiastical learning and canon law all over Europe. Schools were also established in many of the greater monasteries ; but the great seminary was in Canterbury, where classes were established not only for ecclesiastical music and for Greek and Hebrew theology, but also for the more secular subjects, including arithmetic and astronomy, and the art of illuminating and writing books. England under the influence of this eminent man became an important literary centre. "Never," says Bede, writing enthusiastically of this period of Theodore's work, "since the Anglo-Saxons landed in Britain, had more happy days been known. We had Christian kings at whose bravery the barbarous nations trembled ; all hearts were inflamed by the hope of those celestial joys which had just been preached to them; and whosoever wished to be instructed in sacred learning found the masters that he needed close at hand." In this Canterbury school was trained a young scholar under Theodore and Hadrian, whose work and influence extended throughout England, and even far beyond. His name was Aldhelm, to whose work we shall presently return.

But now Theodore and Wilfrid came into collision. The breach between king Egfrid and Wilfrid, which resulted largely from the unhappy part the bishop played in the matter of Etheldreda's leaving her husband and adopting the monastic life, was never repaired. The king, on the regrettable and sorrowful dissolution of his first marriage, wooed and won another princess —Ermenburga, a sister-in-law of the West Saxon king. The new queen hated Wilfrid from the first ; perhaps on account of his devoted friendship to her predecessor, Etheldreda ; or it may be—for family life and sympathy were strong among the Saxons and Engles—that she simply adopted her husband's domestic wrong. It was Ermenburga who pointed out to king Egfrid — still smarting from the wound Wilfrid's influence and conduct had inflicted on his once happy home life—how the enormous power of a subject like the bishop would in time overshadow the throne ; she painted to her husband in glowing colours, in language stimulated by hatred, the pomp and luxury, the vast, ever-increasing riches of Wilfrid, the number of monasteries all devoted to his person, the innumerable array of his vassals, and the growing influence of the all-powerful ecclesiastic.

Now Theodore of Canterbury's wishes to subdivide the enormous Northumbrian diocese were well known at the court of Egfrid ; already at the Church Council which Theodore had summoned at Hertford in 673, the archbishop of Canterbury had mooted his proposition of subdivision, but finding grave opposition from Wilfrid, had adjourned his request. Egfrid and Ermenburga now determined to strike an effective blow at Wilfrid, and threw themselves with ardour into Theodore's designs. The Northumbrian sovereign met Theodore at York while Wilfrid was absent, and the king and the archbishop agreed to depose Wilfrid and to divide his vast diocese into four divisions.

As far as we can judge now, archbishop Theodore's action in the matter of the deposition and banishment of Wilfrid was contrary to all church order, and will ever remain a blot upon the fair fame of the prelate's great and useful career. Indeed, the old man himself recognised this, and years after, shortly before he died, tried to make what amends were in his power to the injured bishop. The diocese of York and Northumbria was subdivided into four dioceses—of York, Hexham, the northern portion of Mercia, and Lindisfarne. Over the last named, it was proposed to appoint the deposed Wilfrid. Curiously enough, the three bishops who were placed over the new sees were monks taken from the ancient Celtic monasteries, who, while recognising the now universally adopted Roman customs, were naturally hostile to the great Roman reformer and supplanter of those Celtic traditions and uses in which they had been brought up, and to which they, no doubt, were still passionately attached. In all these transactions, Egfrid and Theodore evidently made use of the old animosity which still existed between Rome and the school of Iona and Lindisfarne.

In vain did Wilfrid remonstrate ; in vain did he publicly demand an explanation of the strange procedure of Theodore and Egfrid. "It is," said he, "simple plundering." They replied, "We charge you with no crime, but we will not change our determination." Then said the deposed and plundered Wilfrid, "I appeal to the judgment of the Bishop of Rome." This was a memorable act, *this first appeal to Rome* on the part of a great English subject, and one that, as will be seen, in the coming ages led to far-reaching consequences.

The exiled and fallen bishop was accompanied on his journey to Rome by a numerous train of devoted followers, and his journey Romewards was an eventful one. The ship which bore him from the shores of England was carried by tempestuous and contrary winds far out of its course. At last he landed on the low and marshy shores of Friesland. These districts were then inhabited by a northern tribe to whom Christianity was unknown. It was one of the peculiar features of the character of Wilfrid that he could at once forget his personal troubles, and perhaps ambitions, and throw himself with ardour into any new work which appeared ready to his hand. He resolved to act as missionary to these pagan Northmen amongst whom thus unexpectedly he found himself ; and for a whole winter, neglecting himself and

forgetting his wrongs, with splendid eagerness addressed himself to this new work. His rare power, his singularly winning manner, his intense earnestness, won many converts to his Master's faith, and the seeds of Christianity were sown far and wide by him and his companions in that comparatively unknown district.

At length, in the year A.D. 679, he appeared in Rome. Before his arrival, however, envoys from England, charged by archbishop Theodore and the great and powerful abbess Hilda, had already brought the story of Wilfrid's deposition to the Roman bishop and his councillors. Wilfrid and his great work, his wrongs and his ambitions, were all well known at Rome. But Rome and its astute bishop, with that wisdom which usually characterised its policy, had recognised in Wilfrid one of its most devoted and able servants, and had in large measure grasped the nature of Wilfrid's great work in the past in England. It had recognised the part Wilfrid had played in the substitution of Roman for Celtic Christianity in the new England of the Northmen, and determined to give every facility to the famous exiled bishop to plead his cause before the Roman judges to whom he had appealed.

The bishop who claimed to be the head of the Mother Church of Western Christendom, entrusted the hearing of the important cause to an assembly of fifty bishops and presbyters, over which he presided in person. After a careful and patient hearing the Cardinal bishops of Ostia and Porto reported to the presiding Bishop of Rome, that Wilfrid was innocent of any crime meriting deposition. The Engle prelate had submitted himself without reserve to the judgment of Rome, and Rome directed that he should be at once restored to his vast northern see; that he should divide that see as archbishop Theodore desired; but that the coadjutor bishops should be chosen by Wilfrid himself. There is no doubt but that this decision was a fair one; for by Theodore at least, owning fully the Roman obedience, Wilfrid had been undoubtedly harshly and illegally treated; and his past labour and splendid success in his work had surely merited a very different treatment. At the same time the wisdom of archbishop Theodore's policy in England was recognised and endorsed by the authoritative prescription of a new arrangement of dioceses, the number of which were at once to be largely augmented in the island. But Wilfrid, not Theodore, was to select the northern prelates who were to be his suffragans. The bishops who had been appointed by Theodore and king Egfrid in their division of Wilfrid's large diocese, were necessarily to be at once deposed.

While Wilfrid was at Rome Etheldreda, somewhile queen of Northumbria and subsequently foundress and abbess of Ely, died, still young, of one of those contagious disorders which, as we have said, were then so frequent. Etheldreda had been one of Wilfrid's dearest friends, and his unhappy influence over her in inducing her to take the veil and leave her husband king Egfrid, had no doubt been the principal cause of the bitter enmity which king Egfrid had lately displayed against him. Among the far-reaching projects for

the future work of Christianity in England which Wilfrid entertained, was the entrusting great power into the hands of *women converts*, whose enormous influence he foresaw in matters connected with religion. He fully appreciated the work and energy, and recognised the vast power of a Hilda or an Ebba, both scions of the royal house assisting her to break away from her marriage tie ; affording thus a terrible demonstration of the danger which had arisen even in this early age, that in furtherance of the ends of a gigantic ecclesiastical system, all other human interests, however sacred, might be trampled under foot. The great double

ELY, FROM THE FENS.

of Northumbria. But the weight of these eminent and devoted women was thrown on the side of the old Celtic party. Wilfrid longed to train up similar influential women, from whose devotion and energy he hoped much in the future work of evangelising those districts of the island where paganism was still dominant. The disposition and ability of queen Etheldreda were well known to Wilfrid, who thought in her he had found a fitting instrument for his plans. Hence, perhaps, the deplorable part he took in monastery of Ely, which Etheldreda founded amidst the fens of East Anglia, and the reputation she rapidly acquired, showed that Wilfrid had rightly estimated her great powers. Her premature death was a great misfortune to him ; but her work at Ely was enduring.

During Wilfrid's stay at Rome the Council was held which considered and condemned the Monothelite heresy. For half a century this strange heresy, which affected the Catholic doctrine respecting our Lord, had troubled the Church, and

had been widely spread in the East.* A synodical Letter framed by the Council, written to the Emperor of the East, was signed by 120 bishops, among whom the name of Wilfrid as the representative of English bishops appears. Wilfrid at this juncture undertook to guarantee the faith of all the Anglo-Saxon bishops, as well as the faith of the churches in the north of the island, among the Scots, and also of the churches of Ireland. This shows that Wilfrid and the Roman party had no doubt as to the orthodoxy in fundamental matters of the Celtic church, to which in matters of rites and uses he was so opposed.

Wilfrid then returned to his native country, and presented at once to king Egfrid the instructions of the Bishop of Rome, which ordered his immediate reinstatement in his northern see. The Northumbrian monarch convoked an assembly, at which the letters from Rome were publicly read. Without questioning, however, the authority of the Mother Church of Rome, the Council decided that the judgment in favour of Wilfrid had been bought. The bishop was imprisoned, and all access to him was rigidly forbidden. His captivity was most rigorous; he was shut up in a cell into which daylight scarcely penetrated, and was stripped of everything. More moderate counsels, however, soon prevailed, and king Egfrid offered to restore part of his old diocese to the imprisoned bishop if he would consent to acknowledge the falsity of the Roman decree. Wilfrid, of course, absolutely refused to do any such thing, and the imprisonment again became more rigorous. The captive was transferred to a northern fortress near Dunbar. From this irksome captivity he was soon, however, released, through the intervention of the princess Ebba, abbess of Coldingham, who represented to the king and to queen Ermenburga, who was then suffering from illness, the grave scandal which the harsh treatment of so great and eminent a man as Wilfrid stirred up.

Wilfrid was now once more at liberty, but he was landless and homeless. He hoped to find an asylum, and perhaps congenial work which his soul longed for, in Mercia, but there the animosity of the Northumbrian king pursued him, and Mercia drove him forth. The same strange destiny hunted him out of Wessex, where the queen was a sister of his enemy Ermenburga. Thus driven away from the more civilised kingdoms of the Northmen conquerors, Wilfrid took refuge among the South Saxons in the

* MONOTHELISM is defined by Theodore, bishop of Pharan in Arabia, one of the earliest teachers of this heresy—who wrote about A.D. 616—as "in the incarnation of our Saviour there is but one operation, whereof the framer and author is God the Word, and of this the Manhood is the instrument, so that whatsoever may be said of Him, whether as God or Man, it is *all the operation of the Godhead of the Word*." In opposition to this, the orthodox doctrine teaches that the faculty of willing is inherent in *each* of our Lord's natures, although, as His person is one, *the two wills act in the same direction*—the human will being exercised in accordance with the divine. The Monothelites were condemned as heretical in the 6th General Council, held at Constantinople, the last which the Anglican Church acknowledges as a General Council. It lasted about ten months, A.D. 680–1. It was summoned and presided over by the Emperor Constantine the Fourth. The Monothelites were pronounced unorthodox, as holding a heresy *which destroyed the perfection of our Lord's humanity by denying it a will and an operation.*

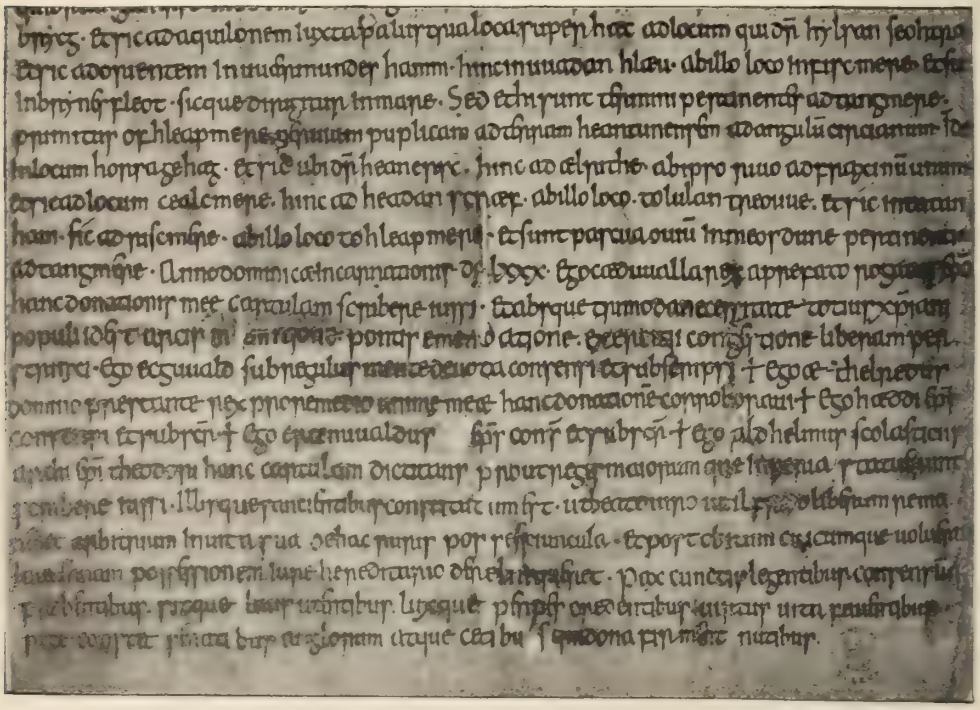
country lying to the west of Kent—a district lying round the later-built city of Chichester, and including the coasts running far out into the English Channel, a peninsula on which the ancient cathedral of Selsey was subsequently erected. These South Saxons were still, for the most part, pagans — men who, when the Engles and East and West Saxons were accepting the religion of the conquered inhabitants of the island, held sternly and resolutely to the faith of their Northmen forefathers. They were in a measure cut off from the more civilised districts of Kent and Wessex by the forest screen of the far-reaching Andredsweald. Among these peoples the banished Wilfrid settled.

The brilliant and versatile teacher quickly won their hearts. Among these uncivilised pagans he played the part, now of a fisherman on their coasts, teaching them new and cunning devices in the craft; now he became among them the earnest and eloquent preacher; now he acted as their devoted friend and comforter when dark days of famine and drought came upon the country. His popularity among these wild heathen folk seems to have been boundless. One of the characteristics of this singular man was his power of adapting himself to all sorts and conditions of men. He was equally at home in the council-chamber at Rome, discussing the most profound and difficult questions of Christian statecraft, as in the rough wooden hall of a South Saxon king or thane, arguing on the fishing or harvest prospects of the simple fisher-folk or tillers of the soil; to-day the ardent and impassioned missionary-evangelist, amid the sands and dunes of Frisia; to-morrow the eloquent and persuasive orator at a great national assembly of Engles, discussing the gravest questions of churchmanship with king and thane, bishops and abbesses; equally the trusted friend of the polished and saintly royal abbess of Ely or Coldingham, as of the rudest fishermen of Frisia or Selsey. He carried with him ever the same winning tongue, the same real sympathy, the same power as a wise counsellor of the king and abbot, of the fisherman and the hunter; wherever his varied fortune led him, success attended him. For ages he was revered as the first devoted apostle of the Frisians and of the South Saxons—the one who first, and with strange success, bore the message of the Gospel to a whole people, who, till they heard the voice and felt the handpress of Wilfrid, were devotees of idol gods and worshippers in idol temples.

The king of these wild South Saxon folk became his devoted friend and admirer. He gave him broad lands in his domains, and there the exile founded a monastery which subsequently became the seat of the bishop of the South Saxons. For five years Wilfrid lived among these people, helping, guiding, teaching them. His name was never forgotten, but was treasured for ages as the name of the saintly father who brought a whole people to Christ.

Throughout this long period of Wilfrid's career, the conduct of Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, is hard to explain. Indeed, apologists of Theodore are obliged to confess that his behaviour to Wilfrid for many years appears a blot on a singularly good and useful life. In the first instance, the prominent position, almost one of

complete independence of the see of Canterbury, which Wilfrid occupied in the North of England, may have excited jealousy. But after his rival had fallen, no reason can be found for the continuance of the persecution on the part of Theodore. It could obedience to Rome, among the great objects of their lives. It may be that the wise metropolitan deemed it best to keep himself clear of the strong personal hostility which obviously actuated the king, and for which Wilfrid had given



END OF A CHARTER OF CÆDWALLA, KING OF WESSEX, A.D. 680, GRANTING LANDS TO WILFRID.*

not be any difference concerning the Roman question; for the strange thing in the painful relations which for so many years existed between these two eminent and distinguished ecclesiastics, who did so much good work in laying the foundation of our church, was that both of them were ardent adherents to Rome and her policy; that both of them placed the supremacy of Rome, the adoption of Roman uses and practices, compliant too much reason. But there are other evidences that there was something in Wilfrid's character which inspired among his contemporaries great dislike as well as great love.

In the year 685, when Wilfrid was in the midst of his noble and most successful work in the south of England, archbishop

* The charter is witnessed by Egwald, subking; Ethelred, a king; Hæddi, bishop; and Aldhelm (then a scholar of archbishop Theodore), who drew up the charter.

Theodore again filled up the sees of Hexham and Lindisfarne, which had been carved out of the vast northern province, without consultation with Wilfrid, in the yet more distinguished Cuthbert. We hear, again (probably for the reasons already indicated), nothing of any remonstrance on the part of these dis-

WILFRID WITH THE SOUTH SAXONS (*p.* 215).

whose diocese they originally were—as if the bishop of York were either dead or canonically deposed. Two of the most saintly and venerated men of the age were placed in these sees—Eata, the pupil of Aidan, generally known as the abbot of Mailros (Melrose), and tinguished men of God respecting the apparent infringement of bishop Wilfrid's episcopal rights. Cuthbert was sorely disinclined, it is true, to accept the episcopate, but his reluctance was apparently based as stated elsewhere, on quite other grounds.

A terrible fate, however, awaited king Egfrid of Northumberland. In the very same year, 685, in which Cuthbert accepted the bishopric of Lindisfarne, and Eata the see of Hexham, Egfrid's army invaded Ireland, and cruelly ravaged a portion of that country; not even sparing monasteries which had for a long time been celebrated throughout the western world as centres of religion and learning. In the following year the king himself headed an expedition against the northern Celts, and harassed with relentless cruelty a large part of the Lowlands of Scotland, districts which during the preceding reigns had acknowledged the supremacy of Northumberland. But at last the army of Egfrid engaged the Celts in a disadvantageous position, where the Engles were utterly routed; and the awful news was brought to queen Ermenburga that "Egfrid and the flower of his nobles lay a ghastly ring of corpses on the far-off moorland of Nectansmere," in Fife. Queen Ermenburga, also the relentless enemy of Wilfrid, became a nun, and subsequently an abbess of a religious house. "Thus this Jezebel," as the biographer of Wilfrid terms her, "changed suddenly from a wolf into a lamb." Northumbria never recovered from the effects of the fatal fight at Nectansmere, and from that day ceased to occupy the first place among the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

Upon the fortunes of Wilfrid the day of Nectansmere exercised a marked influence. Two of his deadliest enemies had disappeared from the great arena of life. Egfrid was dead, and his queen was a veiled nun; and his third foe, Theodore, was now a very old and worn-out man. He was more than eighty years of age when the fight at Nectansmere broke up the power of Northumberland. Theodore, apparently shocked and appalled at the awful ruin which had fallen on his friend king Egfrid, and feeling that the hour of his own death was approaching, determined not to pass away before he had made some amends to the great bishop whom he had wronged. He sent for Wilfrid, still working among the South Saxons, where he was dearly loved, and in an interview which had London for its scene, made him the most ample amends in his power; addressing Wilfrid as "Most Holy Bishop," and confessing his deep sorrow for the evil he had wrought against him; acknowledging, too, that there was no fault in Wilfrid. The reconciliation between the two old enemies was complete. It is a happy "memory" in the life of that eminent church organiser, Theodore, that he had the courage to acknowledge his error, and the nobility to make signal efforts on behalf of his old foe, in the years that yet remained to him of life and work.

Theodore lived more than five years after this act of justice. He even tried to bring it about that Wilfrid should succeed him in his high office as archbishop of Canterbury; but this wish never came to pass. Still, however, the old man had the satisfaction of seeing that through his exertions Wilfrid was admitted into the intimate friendship of Ethelred the king of Mercia, who after the death of Egfrid on the field of Nectansmere became the most powerful king in England—a friendship which remained unbroken till death, and which years later, when Wilfrid again

became a homeless exile, stood him in good stead.

But the old archbishop was not content with securing the powerful friendship of the Mercian monarch for his former enemy, but set himself the far more difficult task of reinstating Wilfrid in his old position in the north. The influence of Theodore was very great. He was not only the acknowledged Primate of the Church of England, but his reputation for vast learning and knowledge extended far beyond the confines of Britain. He was recognised everywhere as a wise statesman, as well as a great churchman and profound scholar. Backed by him, Wilfrid obtained from Aldfrid, a younger son of the great Northumbrian king Oswiu, the brother and successor of the dead Egfrid, the restitution of his vast monastic estates at Hexham and Ripon; and was even reinstated as bishop of York, and was allowed to appoint or re-appoint the suffragans of that great see. Thus, in the year 687 Wilfrid again appears on the stage of public life, as the head of all the Northumbrian churches.

A little later, full of years and honours, died Archbishop Theodore, after an eventful episcopate of two-and-twenty years. He had successfully consolidated and organised the Church in England, over which, when a comparatively old man, he had been suddenly called to preside. With the solitary exception of his strange conduct to Wilfrid, for which he had made all the amends in his power, no flaw can be traced in his grand and noble life. The old Greek monk holds, and ever will hold, among the long and distinguished line of the archbishops of the mother church of England, a prominent place. As a profound scholar and a teacher of scholars, England owes him a deep debt. Under his wise and thoughtful rule, powerfully aided by the work of his friend the monk Hadrian, Canterbury became not only a centre of scholarship—a scholarship by no means confined to theology—but "a producer of books." From the days of Theodore the land had its own scholars, and soon had no need to seek its bishops and teachers in foreign lands; it soon *taught* its *teachers*.

But Theodore was something more than a scholar and teacher. When he came to England he found the supremacy of Canterbury a very shadowy and unreal thing. Before he passed away, all the many bishops among the Engles and Saxons acknowledged the primacy of the mother church of Canterbury. Church order had indeed been evolved out of chaos. The Church of England, from the Forth to the Thames, from the Essex marshes to the banks of the Severn sea, was more or less obedient to the decrees of Canterbury, and Canterbury was the obedient and loyal servant of Rome.

The dream of Roman order and discipline was thus largely realised in England. In the lands of the Engle and Saxon conquerors, Celtic independence in church matters was now a thing of the past; but here, although Theodore did much good by way of organisation and consolidation, and even of development in the matter of the Roman obedience, which permanently changed the spirit and character of the Church of England, it must be confessed that the first and most important steps in this work were taken by Wilfrid. It was on the 19th

of September—the exact date has been preserved—690 A.D., that Theodore, at the ripe age of eighty-eight, expired.

EARLY SAXON DIOCESES.

Wrapped in his monastic habit as a shroud, the remains of the famous Greek archbishop were laid, not in the porch where so many of his predecessors lay, but in the church itself.

Wilfrid, when his powerful rival died, was fifty-six years old. The complete reconciliation of the two bishops some four or five years before, will ever gently throw a veil over much that is sad and regrettable in the story of the two who worked so much noble work in the church they both loved well. About three years before Theodore's death, thanks to the archbishop of Canterbury's powerful pleading, Wilfrid had been restored to his great position in Northumbria by the reigning king Aldfrid, the son of Oswiu, the brother of Egfrid slain at Nectansmere. For about five years Wilfrid's rule continued in the church of the north, and the causes which immediately led to his downfall in 691 are not very clear. That he had many determined enemies among monks and nuns, and powerful Northumbrian thanes still secretly attached to the old Celtic uses, is clear. These looked upon Wilfrid—and rightly—as the destroyer of that ancient school of Christianity which they loved best; and their influence may have inaugurated a renewed formal protest against all authority connected with Rome, which the king, a little later, openly avowed. He had, too, other foes—men who had profited by his former deposition, and who, now he was restored, had to put up with the loss of much, if not of all they had gained by the exile of Wilfrid and his friends. Then his own imperious disposition was ill adapted to conciliation; in his long exile and painful sufferings he had forgotten nothing. The result of intrigues and counter-intrigues against the mighty bishop ended in a fresh decree of banishment being put out by the Northumbrian court, and once more Wilfrid found himself an exile.

But here the dead hand of his old enemy,

who in later years had become his warm friend—the archbishop Theodore—was felt to some purpose. One of Theodore's kind actions in behalf of Wilfrid was the firm friendship he had established between Wilfrid and the powerful Mercian sovereign Ethelred. In this his hour of need Ethelred welcomed him, and gave him the then vacant see of Lichfield, the chief position in the church of the far-reaching Midlands. For eleven long years the deprived Northumbrian bishop lived under the shadow of the Mercian throne, ruling and administering the Christian church of the Midlands in peace. They were eleven very quiet years, and history has little to say about them.

The arch-see of Canterbury was filled after the death of Theodore by a priest-monk named Berchtwald, formerly a monk, as some suppose, in the famous and ancient monastery of Glastonbury, and afterwards abbot of Reculvers, near Canterbury, on the Kentish coast. Berchtwald was an offshoot of the royal house of Mercia. Thus we have the strange sight of a descendant of Woden in the chair of Augustine! He, like his predecessor, was a man of great learning, though, as Bede tells, he was far from equalling Theodore. Berchtwald was a wise, gentle prelate, and ruled at Canterbury nearly forty years. But he too, in the early years of his archiepiscopate, was no friend to Wilfrid; and one of the most remarkable facts about the whole series of transactions is that the more famous men of the great Canterbury school, who certainly had no dispute with him on the question of Roman discipline, appear to have been ever hostile to him; notably the learned Hadrian, Theodore's friend, who for thirty-nine long years was abbot of St. Augustine and head of its renowned school. Even his old companion, Benedict Biscop, the architect, musician, and scholar, the founder of great monasteries, in the later portion of his career seems also to have been no friend to him.

During these eleven years of Wilfrid's quiet life and work at Lichfield there was peace also in the northern province; but it was accompanied evidently with an uneasy feeling that Wilfrid was still the lawful

THEODORE'S DIOCESAN SYSTEM.

bishop and head of the Northumbrian dioceses, and that the ruling prelates held their positions illegally, as Wilfrid had never beer canonically deposed. The men who loved Rome (and they were many) could not forget the great Council held there in the years 679-680, and the letter

(*Photo. by Chester Vaughan, Acton, W.*)
RECULVERS (AT PRESENT TIME).

of Agathon, the Bishop of Rome, formally reinstating Wilfrid in all his great offices. A Council was summoned at last to consider the whole question anew. It met probably at Nesterfield, near Ripon, in the Northumbrian realm, in 702. King Aldfrid, Berchtwald of Canterbury, and most of the English bishops, were present. The tone of the assembly was bitterly hostile to the exile, who was invited to be present and to plead his own cause. Every effort was made to induce Wilfrid of his own accord to submit himself and to resign, but the old man firmly refused. His faithful friend and biographer Eddius, among others, in later days William of Malmesbury, gives us some of the arguments pressed home in the course of the debate by the eloquent and earnest Wilfrid. "Shall I," asked the indignant veteran bishop, "sign my own condemnation, I who—unworthy though I be—for forty years have borne the name of bishop?" He then enumerated his chief successes in that long period: "Was not I the first, after the death of those great ones whom St. Gregory sent from Rome, to root out the poisonous seeds sown by Scottish missionaries?" We can hear still the murmurs of bitter disapproval

sounding through the Council at these imprudent words reflecting on Aidan and Columba and the Irish saints; but, disregarding all prudence, Wilfrid went on: "Was it not I who brought back the whole of Northumbria to the true Easter and the Roman tonsure? Did not I first teach the church in England the sweet harmonies of the primitive church in the responses and chaunts of the two alternate choirs? Did not I introduce among you the rule and order of St. Benedict [at that time, in countless houses of prayer for both sexes, almost the invariable rule and practice]? Am I, after such a life, such a record, to condemn myself? I appeal to Rome."

Thanks to the safe-conduct promised by the king, the old man returned safely to Lichfield. Notwithstanding the adverse decision of the Council, and the sentence of excommunication pronounced against the monks of Ripon who were faithful to Wilfrid, the Mercian king continued, as he had promised Theodore, the exile's steadfast friend. Again, with a few faithful adherents, the almost worn-out bishop set out on the long and weary journey to Rome, to conduct his appeal.

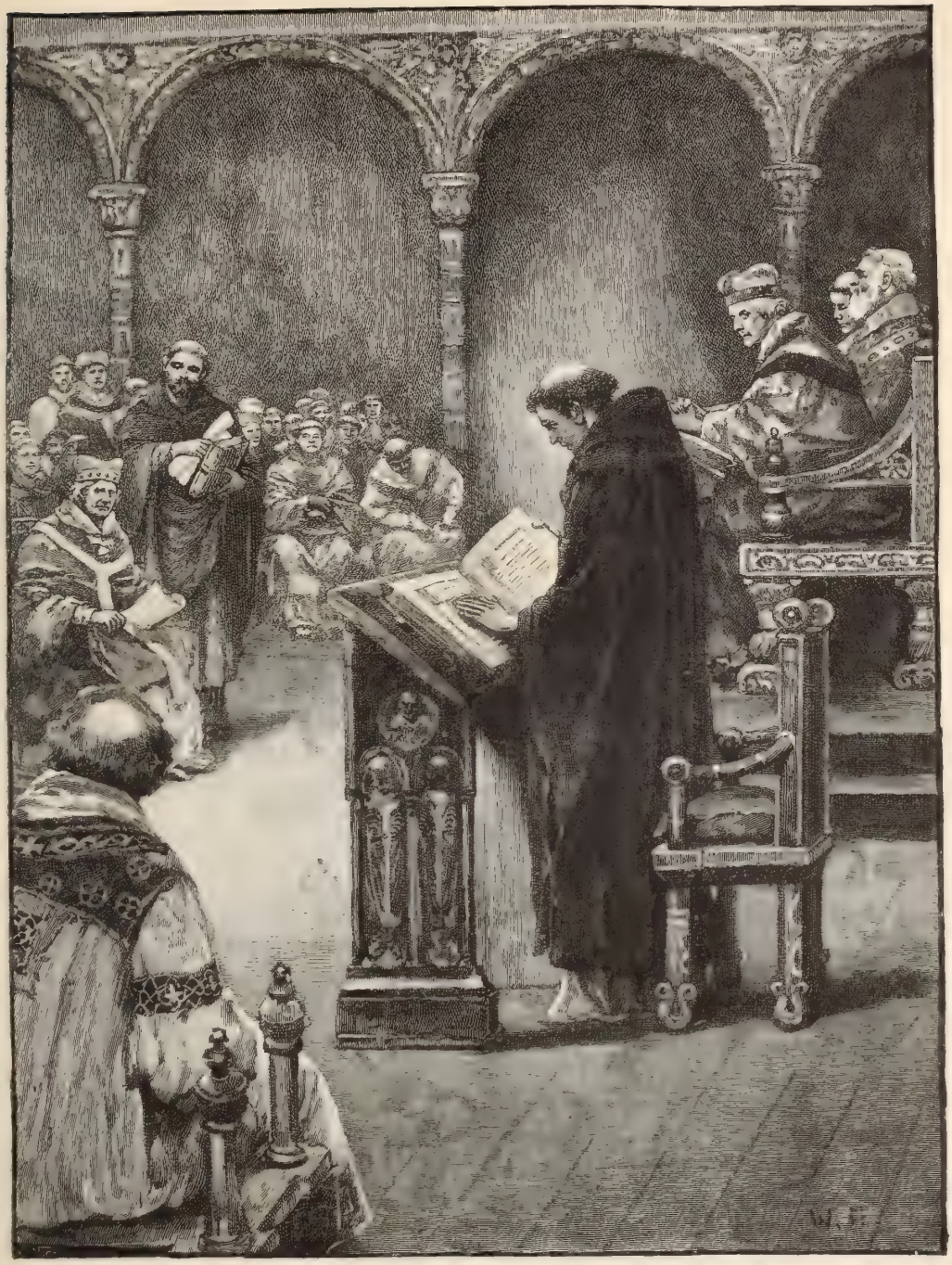
This was his third visit to the Eternal City. In the first visit, as a young and ardent scholar, burning to assist the cause of Rome and to introduce Roman rites and uses, and above all Roman obedience, into the growing church of his native land, aided with all the influence and gifts of his queen Eanfleda, he had spent a happy and a useful time there, and had seen much and learned much. Again in middle life he had gone to Rome as a renowned and persecuted bishop. This second time, surrounded by an influential train of devoted followers, he had presented himself to the Pope and asked for that simple justice at the hands of Rome, which was denied him by his king and brother-prelates at home. He was then received with all honour, treated during his lengthened stay with all distinction, and was pronounced innocent of every charge which his enemies then made against him. Now a third time he visited the Mother Church of Christendom, of whose vast pretensions and enormous claims to universal dominion he had been the notorious and successful champion during a life of restless work and arduous toil, again asking for that justice, which he maintained was persistently refused him in his native land.

But on the occasion of this third visit Wilfrid was past seventy years of age, worn out with labour and disappointment, comparatively poor, and only accompanied by a few faithful followers. Most of his friends had passed away. At Rome many had heard of, but few had seen Wilfrid. The reigning Bishop of Rome was John VI., a Greek. Five bishops or popes had sat in the "chair of St. Peter" since Wilfrid had so successfully pleaded his cause before Agathon the Benedictine pope. Once more he prayed for justice. A careful and thorough investigation of his case was ordered. The judges appointed to hear the story held, it is said, as many as seventy sittings—so important did the Roman statesmen deem the matter. The case lasted four months. Deputies from Berchtwald of Canterbury, as representing his accusers, severely denouncing the deposed bishop, were heard at length. The pleadings of Wilfrid seem to have been gentle,

and the request he made of the Roman see generous and moderate as regards his adversaries. He offered to give up his claim to his vast diocese, and only begged that his two important foundations of Ripon and Hexham, with their daughter monasteries, should be left to him.

One very striking scene reported must have occurred at the close of the long trial. It took place at a crowded meeting, at which were present not only the judges appointed, but many of the clergy and nobles of Rome who had been summoned. The acts of the former Council were solemnly read, and when the reader came to a passage which spoke of the triumphant acquittal of Wilfrid years before, and how he had been positively admitted, as will be remembered, to bear witness of the faith of the bishops of England, the assembly was amazed, and each man asked himself, Who, then, was this other Wilfrid? Then Boniface, an old counsellor of the Roman bishop, who had lived himself in the days of the first Council, when Agathon was pope, rose up and with great emphasis said, "This Wilfrid now accused before you is one and the same with the Wilfrid whom Pope Agathon not only acquitted, but placed by his side as a man of stainless faith and life." Then it was unanimously agreed upon by the Council, that one who for forty years had been a bishop must be sent back with all honour to his country. The Pope further ordered archbishop Berchtwald, along with bishop Wilfrid, to convoke a council, and to summon the bishops who had intruded into Wilfrid's diocese, and if possible to end the differences. If this was found to be impossible, these bishops were to be sent to the Holy See of Rome for a formal trial. Letters were formally addressed by the Pope to the kings of Northumbria and Mercia, asking for their help and assistance in these matters, for the love of that peace which our Lord left to His disciples.

Wilfrid, himself, now world-weary, wished to remain in Rome, and there to end his days. But he was commanded to return, and to bring the important cause to a conclusion: at the same time the Pope—moved by pity for the old man—forbade him to continue the cold bath which every night the austere prelate imposed upon himself by way of mortification. Before, however, he had accomplished the whole of the long journey, Wilfrid fell dangerously sick at Meaux, in Gaul. For four days and nights, says his biographer Eddius, he lay unconscious. On the fifth day, of a sudden he raised himself up—Eddius tells us—and asked for his friend, the priest Acca. Acca was a monk of Lindisfarne, very learned, devout, and a famous musician. Seeing his beloved master had revived, Acca knelt down and thanked God. Then together they all talked with holy awe of the last judgment. But Wilfrid having desired to be left alone with Acca, said to him, "I have just had a vision; one clothed in white came to me and said, 'I am Michael the Archangel, and am sent to tell you how God has heard the prayers of your brothers, and that your life was to be prolonged yet several years.'" The bishop recovered, and returning to England was kindly received by archbishop Berchtwald, who at once determined to comply with the orders of Rome, and promised that the decrees of the Council of Nesterfield should be revoked. In Mercia Wilfrid found his old friend king Ethelred a



HEARING OF WILFRID'S APPEAL AT ROME.

cloistered monk. He welcomed the renowned bishop to his new home with the deepest affection, and sending for his nephew, who had followed him on the throne, commended Wilfrid to him. As regards Mercia and Canterbury, all seemed to promise well.

But in Northumberland, where, if he were received again as bishop, great and grave changes would be necessary, and high offices would have to be vacated—where Wilfrid, too, had many relentless enemies—matters were very different. The king temporised at first, but soon distinctly refused to comply with the directions of Rome. "As long as I live," he is reported to have said, "I will change nothing *out of regard to what you term a mandate of the Roman See*," an emphatic deliverance which, as we have hinted, may possibly explain much that had gone before. In a very short time after this refusal, however, king Aldfrid sickened with a dangerous malady. The dying sovereign, as was natural to the ideas of that age, thought it was the hand of God punishing him for his treatment of Wilfrid, and before he died, in the presence of his sister Elfleda, who followed Hilda as abbess of Whitby, he charged his successor—whoever he might be—in the name of the Lord, "for the repose of my soul and his own, to make peace with Wilfrid."

A dark and gloomy time truly now lay before the once great and prosperous Northumbria. The dead king Aldfrid's children were still young. A usurper named Eadwulf seized the crown, and peremptorily ordered Wilfrid to leave the realm within six days. Eadwulf's reign, however, lasted but a few weeks. Another revolution placed Osred, the son of Aldfrid, a boy only eight years old, on the throne. Wilfrid's friends, with the aid of the abbess Elfleda of Whitby, who had become an earnest supporter of the long-banished bishop, prevailed upon archbishop Berchtwald to summon the Council insisted upon by the Pope when he gave judgment on the appeal at Rome.

The Council met somewhere on the banks of the Nidd, not far from Ripon. Wilfrid and the archbishop of Canterbury, who, in deference to the Roman judgment, had espoused the exile's cause, arrived together. The boy-king and the principal northern thanes, and the bishops—men of the highest character and reputation—who filled the sees claimed by Wilfrid, were all present. But the principal and most influential personage there seems to have been the abbess Elfleda of Whitby, who pleaded in Wilfrid's behalf the dying words of her brother king Aldfrid. The conciliatory spirit shown by Wilfrid at Rome was again manifested, and, in spite of much opposition, the aged and sorely-tried bishop obtained all and more than he asked for at Rome. The great monasteries of Ripon and Hexham and their dependent houses, together with the vast possessions attached to them, were given back to Wilfrid as he had requested, with the rank and position of bishop of Hexham. This arrangement satisfactorily closed the long controversy, Wilfrid recognising the other Northumbrian bishops of York and Lindisfarne, and a solemn Eucharist sealed the compact.

Two remarkable incidents of the pacific Council of the Nidd, A.D. 706, must be especially noticed as bearing on the future

fortunes of the Church of England. The first, the powerful influence evidently exercised by Elfleda, abbess of Whitby, over the Council, an influence exerted in favour of Wilfrid. At the Council held in Rome, in 679, to consider the first appeal of Wilfrid, it will be remembered that Hilda, abbess of Whitby, was specially represented. The successful interference of Ebba, abbess of Coldingham, when Wilfrid was imprisoned by king Egfrid, has been already related. These and other casual indications of the great position filled by these early abbesses in the English church, are powerful side-lights which give us some conception of the weight and influence exercised by women who devoted themselves to religion.

The second incident, is the deference paid in these very early days, in the Church of England, to the decision of the Pope or Bishop of Rome. It is true that this interference was warmly resented by king Aldfrid in the first instance, when Wilfrid asked to be reinstated in accordance with the judgment given by Rome; but Aldfrid, as Elfleda bore witness, is said to have repented on his death-bed of this resistance, and the decision of the Council of the Nidd, just related, is mainly based on the Roman judgment. Some years before, the archbishop Theodore, after a long disregard of the wishes of Rome in the case of Wilfrid, in the end gave way, and as far as he was able carried out the original decision of the Pope Agathon. Theodore's successor in the archbishopric, Berchtwald, after a prolonged resistance, completely gave in to the wishes of the Pope, and virtually acted as his faithful instrument in the affair of Wilfrid, although evidently contrary to his own judgment. The king of Mercia, too, submitted to Rome, and complied fully with its requirements. All this, happening as it did in these eventful times, when the foundation stones of the Church of England were being laid, bore its fruit in after-days, and was the precedent for Rome claiming a perpetual right of interference in all matters connected with the church in this our island.

Only three or four years more, and that great figure of Wilfrid will have disappeared from the world-stage, on which for so long a time he had played so distinguished a part. These were, however, for the aged bishop years of perfect peace. No one, prince or churchman, attempted to break the truce ratified in the "Nidd" assembly. He lived now in one, now in the other of those stately groups of buildings which he had years before erected with so much care and love at Ripon and Hexham. Matchless piles they were, which men say were unequalled in those days on this side the Alps. Occasionally he would journey as far as Mercia, and visit some of those centres of religious life and teaching he had spent so much of his life in establishing and fostering. He was ever surrounded by a group of devoted friends, who passionately admired the generous enthusiasm, the tireless zeal, and the winning character of the great prelate, now deservedly famous throughout western Christendom. It was a beautiful evening to a long and often storm-clouded life, and the historian, even if he hesitates to approve of all Wilfrid's aims and methods, loves to dwell upon it. No fair-minded

critic can help admiring with an ungrudging admiration that noble, work-filled life, or rejoicing that such a brave and patient servant of the church, after much affliction, passed away surrounded with love and admiration.

At last the end came, not suddenly, but heralded by unmistakable warnings. In one of his progresses from Hexham to Ripon a deadly faintness prostrated him, somewhat similar to, but more distressing than, the attack to which he well-nigh succumbed at Meaux, in Gaul, as he journeyed that last time from Rome to England. He was carried to Ripon. Thither hurried numbers of abbots and other Churchmen devoted to him, to see for the last time their beloved master. Their prayers for his recovery, however, were again heard, and Wilfrid recovered for a time ; but he was sensible that the end was not far off, and looked upon this last seizure as a solemn warning that the time of his departure, indicated by the archangel in his dream at Meaux, was at hand. Fearlessly and calmly he made his final arrangements. He had a large treasure of gold and silver and gems laid up in his great monastery at Ripon. This he divided into portions. One of these —the largest—he wished to be devoted as an offering to two of the Basilicas of Rome, those dedicated to Santa Maria Maggiore and St. Paul ; another was to be divided among the poor of his people, "for the salvation," as he phrased it, "of my soul" ; another was to be given to the future abbots of his houses of Ripon and Hexham ; the remainder to be divided among the companions of his last exile, "that they," he said, "might have the means of living after my death." He forgot no one. "Remember," he added, "that I name Tatbert, my cousin the priest, who has never left me, to be prior of Ripon, to succeed me when I die. I do all this that the Archangel Michael may find me ready when my hour arrives ; and I do not think it is far distant." The listening monks fell on their knees weeping ; Wilfrid blessed them, commending them to God, and then he left them and his well-beloved Ripon, starting on his last journey through Mercia. They never looked on his face again in life.

His last days were spent, as usual, in work. He visited one after the other of the many homes of prayer and mission work he had established in the far-reaching territory of Mercia, carefully arranging for their future. The last memorable act of his life was the consecration of the church at Evesham, the church which grew eventually into that famous Worcestershire abbey, the scene of one of the most notable events in English history, and the grave of one of the noblest of Englishmen —Simon de Montfort. As the antiquary and the scholar look wistfully and sorrowfully on the fair and graceful Bell Tower, still the chief ornament of the beautiful Vale of Evesham, the solitary remains of that once great home of prayer and learning, they should remember that the last act of Wilfrid was to dedicate that famous house to God. Wilfrid's consecrating service is one and not the least of the remarkable memories which cluster round the mournful wreck of Evesham.

From Evesham he journeyed slowly

towards Oundle, in what is now known as Northamptonshire. By his side rode his dearest friend and relation, Tatbert. Something whispered to Wilfrid it was his last opportunity of telling his early memories; as they rode side by side he poured over to his companion many details generally unknown respecting his past eventful life. At Oundle his malady again seized him. There was no suffering during the "passing" of that great soul; he was even able once more to rouse himself so as to bless the group of weeping monks who with broken voices chanted prayers and psalms round their dying master. As they reached the 30th verse in the 104th Psalm — "Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are exalted" — the faint breathing ceased, and the soul of Wilfrid entered into the open vision of God.

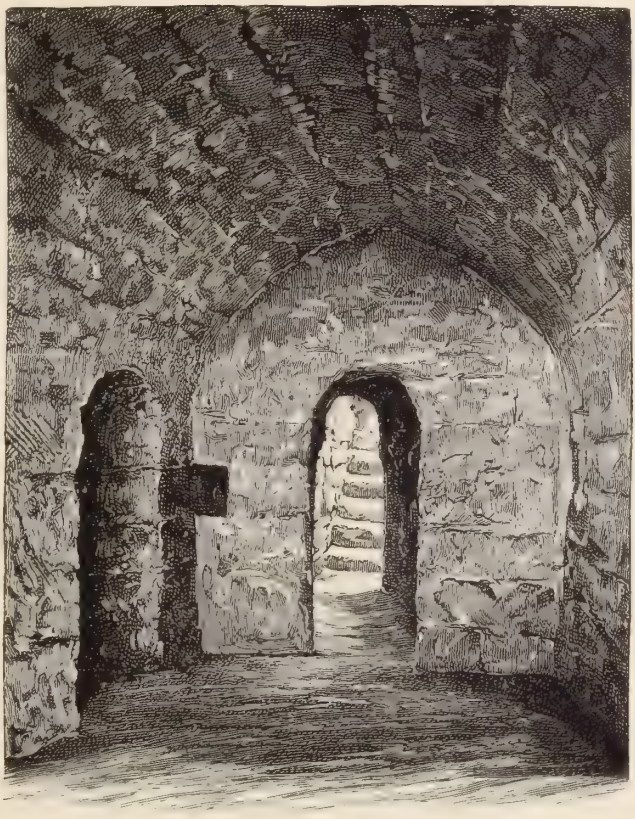


Photo. by C. C. Hedges, Hexham.

THE CRYPT, HEXHAM.

He was, when he breathed his last, seventy-six years old, and had been a bishop and one of the most conspicuous personages in western Europe for forty-five years. One of his last injunctions was singular. He wished the shirt in which his dying body was clothed, still

moist with his last sweat, to be sent to a certain abbess Cyndreda, who had been once one of his converts, and was always his devoted friend. This curious relic was at once despatched to her by Tatbert, who heard his words. A similar thought occurred to Cuthbert in his last moments.

We catch sight of something of the intense veneration with which the renowned bishop was regarded by his contemporaries, from his biographer's account of a great meeting of abbots and monks at Ripon, where his venerated remains were laid by his own request, by the south side of the altar, on the first anniversary of his funeral. "They went on," said Eddius, "to sing complines in the open air. Then they saw the whole heaven lighted up by a great rainbow, the full radiance of which proceeded from the grave of the saint. We all understood by this that the intercession of the saint was to be, by the goodness of God, an impregnable rampart round the vine of the Lord and His family."

Though many had been his friends and devoted admirers during his life, this circle was enormously enlarged after he had fallen asleep. His tomb became at once a favourite object of pilgrimage, and the scene of many reputed, and not improbably of some real miracles. For it is demonstrable that certain disorders receive alleviation, and in some cases a cure, amid the glowing scenes and exalted faith peculiar to those spots which men love to invest with an awful sanctity. This, even in our day of exact science and lynx-eyed criticism, has taken place not once or twice at Lourdes. And the popular veneration with which Wilfrid was regarded was a long-enduring one. We trace its existence four centuries after the saintly bishop's death. Many churches were dedicated to God in his name, and there was scarcely a cathedral that did not possess within its walls an altar and a chantry of St. Wilfrid. Canterbury cathedral, however, disputes with Ripon the honour of the possession of the body of the greatly-honoured saint. Dunstan is credited with having translated it to the metropolitan church. Another record says it was Odo who removed it, having found the Ripon shrine grievously neglected. There is no doubt but that Lanfranc deposited what he supposed were the bones of Wilfrid, in a splendid shrine in his cathedral; but the advocates of Ripon maintain that the body of another Wilfrid—not of the renowned bishop of the seventh century—was removed to the southern cathedral. An "Indulgence" of archbishop Grey in the thirteenth century positively states that the "remains" of Wilfrid at Ripon were perfect, and were exhibited to worshipping beholders. It is certain that one of his arms, encased in silver, was in the York treasury in the sixteenth century, at the epoch of the Dissolution. It has been suggested that somewhere in the walls of that ancient crypt beneath Ripon Minster, undeniably part of Wilfrid's work, and which still is popularly called "St. Wilfrid's Needle," the bones of the saint still rest.

While the substitution of Roman for Celtic Christianity throughout England was of course the great achievement of Wilfrid's life, more or less connected with this momentous change was the almost universal introduction of the Italian Benedictine rule into the many monasteries

originally founded by Wilfrid, and influenced by him, in various parts of England. From Hexham in the north, to Canterbury in the south, before Wilfrid's death, the land was covered with these powerful monastic garrisons of "religious" of both sexes, more or less devoted to the Roman see. In the north and central districts of the island, some of these, such as Hexham and Ripon, Peterborough and Ely, obtained a reputation that extended far beyond the limits of England.

His stubborn and in the long run successful resistance to the claims made by powerful princes, such as Egfrid of Northumbria, to nominate, depose, or translate bishops at their pleasure, bore fruit, not only in his own lifetime, but even for centuries had a powerful effect for good or for evil on the government of the Church of England. While on the one hand it served as a strong precedent when noble-minded patriotic prelates desired to resist the tyranny and greed of the monarch and his advisers; on the other, such a precedent as the general submission on the part of monarchs and prelates to the sovereign judgment of Rome, enormously aided the ever-growing pretensions of the Roman see to interfere in the ecclesiastical affairs of England — an interference, as history points out, frequently disastrous in its consequences. "Thanks to Wilfrid," writes a Romanist historian of great power, "until the Norman Conquest, four centuries later, no English king dared arbitrarily depose a bishop from his see."

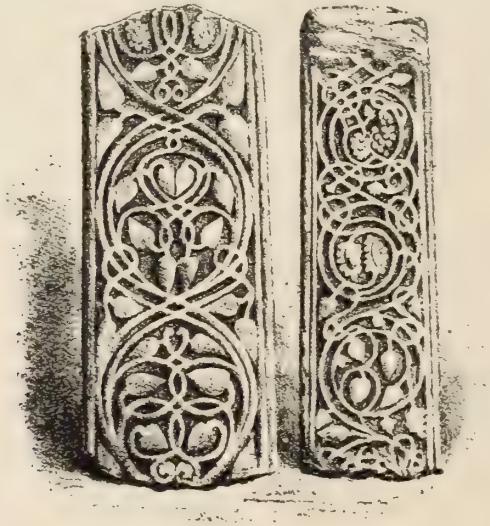
Different minds have variously estimated Wilfrid's work. The Romanist writer naturally speaks of his life and restless toiling with undisguised enthusiasm and ungrudging admiration. To men of the Roman school he is one of the grandest heroes who live along the many-coloured pages of our island story. He is the perfect English saint who first fully recognised the true work and office of the Pontiff of Rome, and who spent the many years of a splendid and devoted life in bringing home to the hearts of Englishmen the conviction that the fortunes of the English Church were closely bound up with their acknowledgment of and implicit obedience to Rome and her Bishop, as the successors and inheritors of Peter and his claims. To writers of another school, his title to honour rests on different grounds. They see that in his eyes discipline and organisation were essential to a powerful church; and that the Christianity of the Roman school possessed all the qualifications he deemed lacking in the ancient Irish and Celtic churches. Rome was, moreover, the possessor of tradition and custom, of a ritual and a practice which it professed to trace to apostolic times. Other considerations, which we have already briefly sketched,* were also doubtless, though perhaps more vaguely, present to his mind. Recognising all this, with all his vast powers he worked to replace the Celtic preachers with others better fitted to carry on and to develop and to organise the Christianity which they had so nobly and successfully preached. This, all schools of thought can recognise as his real title to honour. Those who admire and revere the great Celtic teachers, may and do deplore Wilfrid's way of working. It was rough, often cruel and hard, and frequently unsympathetic; but in the main

* See pp. 180–1.

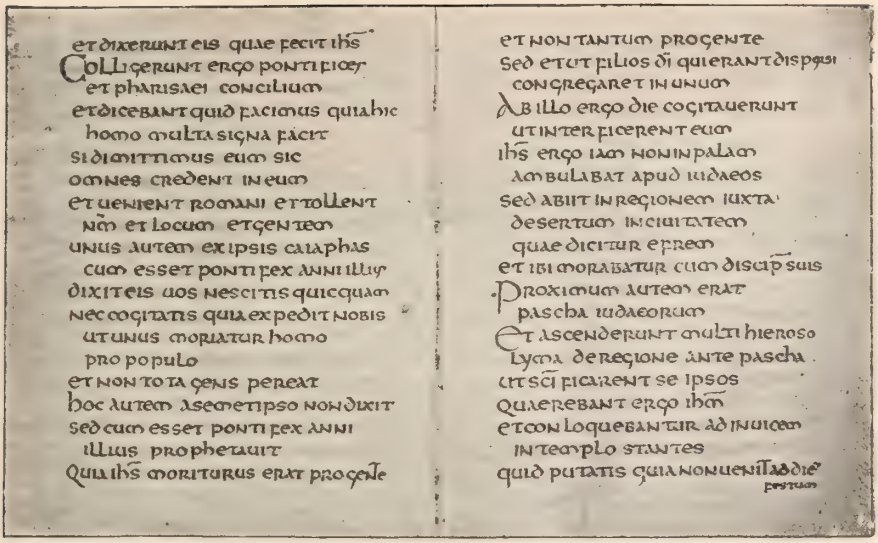
his instinct was true, and hence, in spite of many subsequent changes, his work has affected permanently the form and order and organisation of the Church of England.

All, too, must admire the conduct of this great churchman in adversity. Patient indeed in tribulation, he never lost his high courage, and when driven out of home and power, when stripped of all his soul loved and prized, he braced himself up to new and different toil. Never is the character of this great and eminent man seen to better advantage than as an exile among the sand hills of Frisia, or when banished and proscribed among the poor, rough pagans of Sussex. He laboured with hand and brain unweariedly for months in Friesland, for years in Sussex, to win the souls of the untutored barbarians, among whom his lot was so strangely cast, to his adored Master, Christ.

In the gallery of historical portraits of the great prelates of the Church of England, Wilfrid's will ever occupy a distinguished place. He was the precursor of men like Dunstan and Odo, Lanfranc and Anselm, Thomas A'Becket and Stephen Langton. In certain crises of the lives of these distinguished men, Wilfrid was never forgotten, and perhaps unconsciously imitated. It is true that we see now in a very different light some deplorable acts in the life of this great bishop and statesman. But it is hard, in England, amid the complicated environments of the last years of the nineteenth century, fairly to judge a Christian bishop of the seventh century. It is especially difficult to realise that what now would be impossible, may have been both wise and patriotic in that far-back age of half-veiled Paganism and Christian disorder. The fair and impartial judge will surely give to Wilfrid a high place among those true Englishmen who have, according to their light, served faithfully and devotedly their country and their God.



PORTIONS OF OLD CROSS, FROM HEXHAM (8TH CENTURY).


et dixerunt eis quae fecit ihs
Colligerunt ergo pontifices
et pharisaei concilium
et dicebant quid facimus quia hic
homo multa signa facit
si dimittimus eum sic
omnes credent in eum
et venient romani et tollent
nm et locum et gentem
unus autem ex ipsis caiaphas
cum esset pontifex anni illius
dixit eis vos nescitis quicquam
nec cogitatis quia expedit nobis
ut unus moriatur homo
pro populo
et non tota gens pereat
hoc autem a semetipso non dixit
sed cum esset pontifex anni
illius prophetavit
quia ihs moriturus erat pro gente
et non tantum pro gente
sed et ut filios dei qui erant dispersi
congregaret in unum
ab illo ergo die cogitaverunt
ut interficerent eum
ihs ergo iam non in palam
ambulabat apud iudaeos
sed abiit in regionem iuxta
desertum in civitatem
quae dicitur ephrem
et ibi morabatur cum discipulis suis
Proximum autem erat
pascha iudaeorum
Et ascenderunt multi hierosolymam de regione ante pascha
ut sanctificarent se ipsos
quaerebant ergo ihm
et con loquebantur ad invicem
in templo stantes
quid putatis quia non veniet ad diem
festum

PAGE FROM GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN, XI. 46—56 (7TH CENTURY).
(*Said to have been found in the Coffin of St. Cuthbert. From the Library, Stoneyhurst College.*)

CHAPTER XII.

CUTHBERT, THE LAST GREAT CELTIC SAINT.

Cuthbert's Early History and Vocation—His Gifts as a Preacher—His Austerities—His Teacher Boisil—Cuthbert's Influence for Peace—Life as Prior of Lindisfarne—Retirement to Farne Island—Called thence to the See of Hexham—Last Days and Death at Farne—Strange History of his Remains.

WHILE the events just related were happening; while Theodore was accomplishing such great things in the South and Midlands, and was organising the Church of England; while Wilfrid in the north was carrying out, with different instruments and in a somewhat different spirit, a similar work; while both Theodore and Wilfrid were working with real but quiet enthusiasm and general success to replace the old Celtic practices and uses of Christianity with Roman teaching and traditions, the religious and devotional Christian spirit of the north was receiving a remarkable impulse through the labours and example of one of those rare saints, who from time to time have arisen to influence in an especial degree men's lives, and to sway their hearts.

It was as far back as the year 651, the year that Aidan died, in the early days of Oswiu's reign in Northumbria, that on the pastures of Lammermoor a shepherd boy named Cuthbert told his shepherd companions how, in the quiet watches of the

night, he had seen a vision of angels bearing with them from earth to heaven a spirit of surpassing brightness. On that night, Aidan, beloved of men, passed away. From that moment the life-work of Cuthbert was decided upon: he would devote himself to the task of winning souls to God, and his story well illustrates the religious life of the time.

Giving up his shepherd life, the young Cuthbert presented himself to the solitaries who were dwelling in that cluster of straw-thatched huts built round a small rude church or oratory, near the banks of the Tweed on a green sheltered spot called Mail-ros ("the bare promontory"), afterwards known as Old Melrose, a mission station of the great house of Lindisfarne. Among these solitaries of Mail-ros dwelt two men notable among the famous group of Celtic religious teachers of that age of devoted missionary work—Eata and Boisil. Eata holds an especially distinguished place among the leaders of the Celtic church, and filled various important positions during many years. He was one of the twelve Engles first selected as companions by the holy Aidan. These two from the very first saw in the character of the young shepherd, the promise of rare future distinction in the career to which he had consecrated his life.

From the first days of his joining the little Mail-ros community, Cuthbert surpassed all his brother monks not only in his devotion to study, prayer, vigils, and manual labour, but also in his rare power of winning the hearts of the pagan dwellers in the neighbourhood. He quickly became celebrated as a rarely successful missionary preacher. Not only by his personal gifts, by his sweetness of character, by his singular eloquence, did he attract and win these wild Engle dwellers in Lammermoor and the surrounding districts, but by the reputation which his manner of life soon won for him. The extraordinary austerities which he practised, according to the view of sanctity in that age, surrounded his person with a peculiar awe and veneration. Men told how he passed whole winter nights in the bitter cold of the partly frozen waters, according to a custom not unknown among the more earnest Celtic saints. He was seen, for instance, now and again to plunge into the sea, and, remaining a long time in the deep cold waves, would sing his psalms and hymns. Once, says one of these folk-stories current among the people, a friend and disciple of Cuthbert watched him during a certain night vigil issuing from the deathly cold waters, and then as he fell on his knees renewing his passionate prayers, the disciple saw two otters following him from the sea, who licked his numbed feet and limbs until life and warmth returned.

From Mail-ros the abbot Eata took Cuthbert for a time to the monastery of Ripon, founded by the sub-king Alchfrid, Oswiu's son. There Cuthbert was known as the self-sacrificing and devoted guest-master, receiving poor wearied travellers with peculiar kindness and love. It will be remembered that Eata and his monks were soon driven out of Ripon by Alchfrid for their devotion to the ancient Celtic customs. Cuthbert returned with them to their old home at Mail-ros, and then resumed his missionary labours in the Scottish Lowlands. In the great pestilence of the year 664 his first master and teacher, the prior Boisil, fell sick. Cuthbert, too, was

attacked by the deadly malady, but recovered suddenly, and devoted himself to nursing his loved friend. The story of Boisil's last days is singularly interesting, and tells us something of the touching friendships and enduring piety of these early teachers of English Christianity. As Cuthbert watched his dying friend, Boisil foretold his disciple's future greatness, and urged him, as death was waiting, to learn from his old master all that he could during the very few hours still left for them to be together there. "I have but seven days remaining," said the dying Boisil to Cuthbert, "in which I may speak to you." Cuthbert then asked him what they should read together in that short precious time. "John the Evangelist," replied Boisil; "I have a copy containing seven sheets of 'John,' which we can with God's help read, one for each day, and meditate thereon as far as we are able." They did so, not troubling themselves with minute and subtle questions, dwelling only on St. John's divine lessons of faith and love. On the seventh day, as he had predicted, Boisil fell asleep.

When Boisil died Cuthbert was appointed prior of the house in his room. The abbot of Mail-ros, Eata, was also abbot of Lindisfarne, and seems to have exercised a general supremacy over the many communities in that district. He subsequently became bishop of one of the divided portions of Wilfrid's diocese. It was no doubt owing to the quiet influence of Eata, assisted by his favourite pupil Cuthbert, that the Celtic church in Northumbria peaceably accepted the decrees of the Council of Whitby, and the general substitution of the Roman uses for the customs of the old Celtic church. Eata, Cuthbert, and many earnest men of the old church, submitted to what they felt to be inevitable. There is no doubt but that they felt grieved and pained at the passing away of the old spirit of Celtic Christianity, dear to them from so many familiar associations, precious through so many hallowed traditions handed down from Columba and the famous Irish saints before him. But men like Eata and Cuthbert, when brought into contact with Rome and its immemorial history, with its power of organisation, with its love for obedience and law and order, consciously or unconsciously seem to have felt that the future of the church they loved better than life belonged rather to the Christianity of Rome, than to that strange, passionate, but ill-disciplined Christianity of Ireland, which after all was better fitted to win than to maintain the empire over men's hearts.

Then the same influences which worked so strongly, as we have seen, with Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop in their early life, were no doubt at work in the hearts of men like Eata. The contrast between the stately churches of Rome and Lyons, of Italy, of Southern Gaul, and the rough, rude, straw-thatched, wattled Celtic churches, was no doubt often vividly and truthfully put before them; and the stately services of the lordly basilicas of Rome and Lyons were no doubt, by wandering monk or foreign scholar, put side by side with the plain and simple cult of the Celtic oratories, with more or less eloquence, as they talked together by the hearthside in the long winter evenings. To thoughtful men like Eata, the powerful abbot of Ripon, Mail-ros, and Lindisfarne, the bishop of

Hexham, trained though he was in all the traditions of the loved Columba and the saintly Aidan, these things must have had weight. Perhaps, after all, the Master's religion would appeal to men's hearts with greater force through the medium of an imposing ritual in a stately church, than it could do through the medium of the earnest but plain and simple rites of Lindisfarne. It is certain, at all events, that Eata and Cuthbert and their disciples made no effort to resist the Roman influence after the Whitby Council, but that they adopted its uses and quietly followed its teaching. The example of such men was of enormous weight.

Cuthbert was transferred from Mail-ros to Lindisfarne.* There he led the same life to which the Celtic monastic teachers were accustomed—a life partly spent in the practice of all the austerities of the cloister, partly lived outside among the people, preaching with unwearied assiduity and devotion. The cloister life with these teachers was a preparation for the public work. It is said that Cuthbert only slept one night in three or four; so ardent was he in his perpetual studies, so fervid in his prolonged and passionate prayers. Many stories are told of his wonderful power over the souls of men, of his brave patience, of his unruffled temper, of his angel face. The reputation of his unheard-of austerities won him a love and devotion among the Engle peoples of Northumbria similar to that possessed by Columba of Iona—greater even than that exercised by the saintly and well-loved Aidan.

*The dates here are doubtful. Bede speaks vaguely of "many years" as prior at Melrose and Lindisfarne.

His was a strange nature. In 676, after twelve years of marvellous success as prior, teacher, missionary, he determined to withdraw himself altogether from men, and to give himself wholly to prayer and study. The place which he chose for his solitary cell was a little island called Farne, several miles to the east of Lindisfarne, in the midst of the stormy North Sea, utterly ill-suited for human habitation, sterile and desert, without water, fruits or trees. In this dreary spot Cuthbert dug out of the living rock with vast labour a little cell or rather two cells—one an oratory, the other his dwelling-room. From this cell, he could see nothing but the sky above him, as he wished to be quite undisturbed. The hide of an ox suspended before the entrance to his strange dwelling, which he turned according to the direction of the wind, afforded him a slight defence against the severity of that wild climate. A little plot of ground sown with barley supplied him so sparingly with food, that the dwellers on the neighbouring coast chose to think he was fed by angels with bread from Paradise.

Round their popular saint the Northumbrians have gathered many a legend. One of them, no doubt based on what really happened, tells how the wild sea-birds would gather fearlessly about the man of God whom they loved, and allow him to stroke their soft plumage and caress them. A still more beautiful memory of his eight years' sojourn on this lonely sea-rock, is the account of the numberless visits he received there from all sorts and conditions of men, who sought from the revered saint advice or consolation. These "pilgrims of sorrow," as they have been beautifully

called, came from great distances. Throughout all England spread the rumour that on a sea-girt rock, off the inhospitable rocky Northumbrian coast, lived an anchorite

EGFRID ENTREATING ST. CUTHBERT (*p.* 238).

who was the friend of God, and who was rarely skilled in the beautiful craft of the healing of human suffering. It was said of all the crowds of penitents and world-weary ones who sought the presence of Cuthbert on the rock of Farne, that no sorrowful soul carried back the same sad burden of remorse or care which he had taken with him. These eight years were the happiest of Cuthbert's life. The troubles which rent the church of Northumbria—the strange vicissitudes of bishop Wilfrid's life—seem to have been unnoticed by the solitary in his cell, but who yet in his own strange way influenced so powerfully the religious life of his time.

The closing scenes in Cuthbert's career commenced in the year 684. In that

year a strange scene took place on the lonely rock of Farne. The king of Northumbria, Egfrid, Oswiu's son, accompanied by his principal thanes, landed at Farne, and kneeling before the solitary Cuthbert, besought him in the name of the archbishop Theodore that he would consent to be bishop of the diocese of Hexham, a division of Wilfrid's great Northumbrian province. After a long resistance Cuthbert consented to be a bishop, only stipulating with his old friend Eata that the bishopric should be Lindisfarne, his well-remembered home of many years. This was agreed to, Eata taking himself the see of Hexham. For two short years, therefore, the solitary of Farne played the part of a bishop. He was consecrated at York in the presence of seven other prelates. His new office made no difference in his character. He renewed his old life as a missionary monk, which he had given up when he retired to Farne some eight years before. Only in his journeyings among the people the influence of his preaching and apostolic labours were perhaps augmented by his new dignity. The two years were filled up with constant, unremitting toil. He would penetrate into the most distant and wildest districts of his diocese, preaching to crowds, confirming fresh converts, ever the most devoted friend and pastor and teacher of the poorest and saddest of his people. For long years after the saintly monk-bishop had passed away, his memory remained green among his flock. And those who had been privileged to hear him, would tell their children of the pale, worn bishop with the angel face, who had gone in and out amongst them. They would remind one another how he wept when he prayed and taught, and how sweet and holy his words had seemed to them. The memory of no man, perhaps, has ever taken such deep, enduring root among a people.

But it came to an end all too soon. Worn out by the ceaseless toils he imposed upon himself, his frail strength, already exhausted by years of austerity and self-denial, gave way, and he returned to his little cell and oratory at Farne to die. Herefrid, the abbot of Lindisfarne, gives us some touching details of his last hours. For some days he chose to be absolutely alone. "Then," says Herefrid, "I came to him and found him dying." The great saint was suffering much, but was supremely happy as he lay motionless on his hard stone couch. He asked Herefrid to bury him in Farne. "I would sleep here," he said, "in this very spot, where I have fought my little battle for the Lord. Bury me in this linen shroud which abbess Verca, the friend of God [she was abbess of Tynemouth, and a royal princess], gave me." Herefrid—he tells the little story himself—warmed some water and bathed a painful ulcer which was occasioning great pain to the bishop, and then begged the dying master to drink a little hot wine, for he was quite worn out with pain and abstinence. Then Herefrid gently reproached him for refusing all companionship during these last days of suffering. Cuthbert replied, "It was the will and providence of God that I should suffer a little affliction. I grew weaker when I was left alone, and for five days and nights I have remained without moving." Herefrid asked him,

"My reverend bishop, how have you supported life during this weary vigil?" Then lifting up a little cloth, Cuthbert showed him five onions. "This," he said, "has been my only food for five days; when very parched I tasted these." Herefrid besought him to allow one of the monks from Lindisfarne to remain with him. Cuthbert consented. Herefrid further asked him to give his consent to his burial in his own church at Lindisfarne, among his people who loved him so truly. This he agreed to. The weakness rapidly increased. "Carry me," he said, "into my oratory." He was laid close to the altar there. A monk whom he named—one Wahlstad, whom he specially asked for as his attendant—never left him again.

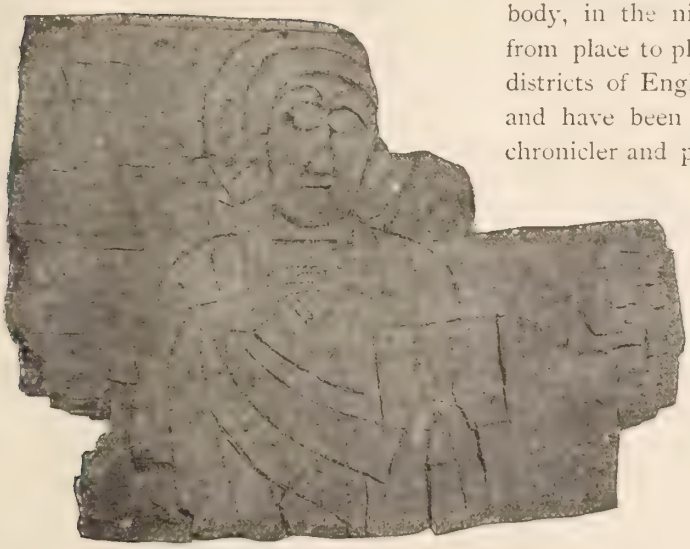
One with him relates how the dying saint spoke little, the severity of his pains being very great; but being pressed to say a few farewell words which would be treasured up, Cuthbert charged the brethren to be at peace among themselves, and to practise true humility. "Have peace and divine charity among yourselves, and when you are called to deliberate, be very careful that you are unanimous in your plans. Let there be mutual concord between yourselves and all other servants of Christ; never despise others who belong to the faith. If you are ever driven from Lindisfarne, carry my bones with you." This last was a strange charge. Was it prophecy? "*Study diligently*," went on the dying saint, "and carefully observe the Catholic decrees of the Fathers, and practise with zeal those institutes of the monastic life which it has pleased God to deliver to you through my ministry; for I know that although during my life some have despised me, yet after my death you will see plainly what I was." About the hour of midnight he received the Holy Sacrament, and so strengthened himself for his death, which he knew was close at hand. Then he looked up, and stretching out his hands as though in prayer, so died. The above related scene took place on the rock of Farné in the North Sea, near Bamborough, on the night of the 20th of March, 687.

These little details are of deep interest; for coming from an eye-witness, they tell us something of the earnest, childlike spirit of these great Celtic teachers, who worked such a mighty change among the barbarian conquerors of our island. They were simple, God-fearing men, who believed intensely the doctrines they pressed home with such passionate earnestness on the pagan warriors among whom they lived. Caring for nothing but the souls of the people to whom they felt they were sent, utterly regardless of their own ease and comfort, they devoted themselves with an entire self-devotion to their noble and beautiful work. As was Cuthbert, so were many others of these early teachers. The picture of his life and work is only the picture of many another life and work of which no record has been preserved. Cuthbert was but a conspicuous and well-known example of a Celtic missionary teacher of the seventh century.

None of our island saints has ever touched the hearts of the people as did Cuthbert, or has left behind him so vast, so enduring a popularity. In the midst of an age of devoted preachers of the Cross, Cuthbert stands out pre-eminent. He possessed without doubt a rare eloquence,

but it was the eloquence which went home rather to the heart than to the head. Among the renowned teachers of the world, that sacred heart-key has ever been their chiefest power; without it no gifts of learning, or even eloquence, are of any real use in the winning of souls to the Master's side. In an age of angry church disputings, when pious, devoted men like Theodore and Wilfrid sadly spoiled their noble record with their wranglings, when saintly women like Hilda were known as bitter partisans, Cuthbert was able to stand aloof. He moved in a higher, purer atmosphere, in which the vain jangling of disputes on the question of Roman and Celtic uses was hushed. A Celtic monk by training, by choice, by all his surroundings, he could yet see the beauty of Roman discipline and order, and was sensible of the grandeur of Roman homes of prayer. Cuthbert united the wild and passionate fervour of the Irish monks of Iona, and the calm and scholarly devotion of the priests trained in the obedience of Rome. The warrior English king; his haughty thanes; the powerful abbess of a Whitby or a Coldingham; the Celtic missionary monk of Melrose; the Roman bishop of Hexham or of York; the English shepherd on the Yorkshire wolds or on the fells of Cumberland; the Norseman sailor—they all listened, and as they listened to the winning, pleading voice, one and all acknowledged the magic of his utterances

PORTIONS OF THE STOLE FOUND IN ST. CUTHBERT'S TOMB, AT DURHAM.

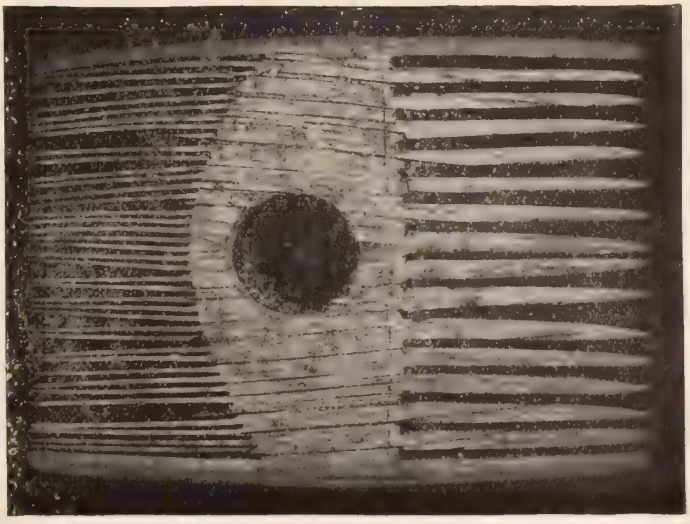


FRAGMENT OF ST. CUTHBERT'S COFFIN.
(From photo by C. P. MacCarthy, Esq.)

and the beauty and power of the religion he not only preached but lived.

His sorrowing monk-friends laid him to sleep as he had bade them, in his own house of prayer at Lindisfarne. There the precious remains of the man, holy and humble of heart, who in his day had done so much to win men to Christ, rested for 188 years. Driven in the year 875 by the Danish sea-plunderers from their quiet home at Lindisfarne, the monks fled, bearing with them the sacred coffin of their saint. The wanderings of the chest which contained the hallowed body, in the ninth and tenth centuries, from place to place through the northern districts of England, read like a romance, and have been a favourite subject with chronicler and poet. Only after nigh two centuries did the remains of Cuthbert find a permanent resting-place on the hill of Durham, where the proudest of our English minsters rises calm and stately over the woods by the rushing Wear—a fitting monument to the pure and holy English saint.

The well-known lines of Scott, besides their faithful picture of the spot, strike another chord and enter upon another romantic history. They relate how—



IVORY COMB FOUND IN ST. CUTHBERT'S COFFIN.
(From photo by C. P. MacCarthy, Esq.)

" . . . After many wanderings past,
He chose his lordly seat at last,
Where his cathedral huge and vast
Looks down upon the Wear.
There, deep in Durham's gothic shade,
His relics are in secret laid,
But none may know the place,
Save of his holiest servants three,
Deep sworn to solemn secrecy,
Who share that wondrous grace." *

Of the many thousands who read the musical lines in Sir Walter Scott's beautiful poem, comparatively few know the eventful story of St. Cuthbert's body, alluded to in them—a story which has run uncontradicted through the ages, and of which the last chapter has still to be written!

The body of the beloved saint has on several occasions been taken from its resting-place and examined in order to ascertain its state; it was always, according to the statement of eye-witnesses, found incorrupt, even at the last examination, which took place in the middle of the sixteenth century—the eve of the Reformation. Three distinct exhumations of the body are formally recorded—the first in A.D. 698, eleven years after Cuthbert's death; the second in 1104, after 418 years. Then it seems to have been thrice examined by responsible eye-witnesses. The third time was in 1537—at the period of the dissolution of the great abbey of Durham by the Royal Commissioners of king Henry VIII.

The way that a body of an eminent person was prepared for the grave in those far-back days was as follows:—The body was first carefully washed, then rubbed with some aromatic preparation, after which it was swathed in a cere-cloth closely adhering to the skin; on this, in the case of a bishop, the different episcopal habits were successively placed. Another envelope of cere-cloth was folded over, and the body deposited (usually in a stone coffin), with a little altar, chalice and paten. In 698, after eleven years of interment, by permission of Eadbert, bishop of Lindisfarne, the body of Cuthbert was exhumed by the monks of Lindisfarne and placed in a wooden shrine over the spot where it had been originally laid. The anonymous monk of Lindisfarne relates what was seen, apparently with the details of an eye-witness, and the account in its main features is repeated again by Bede. The body was found entire—not rigid, but the limbs pliant. The vestments and shoes were undecayed, the napkin about the head still retaining its original whiteness. The precious remains were then enclosed in a wooden coffin, and placed in the shrine prepared by the monks.

In 1104, when Henry I. (Beauclerc) was king, when the new cathedral of Durham was partly completed, the body of Cuthbert was translated from its resting-place in the cloister-garth to the feretory newly prepared for it. Relating to this translation of 1104, and the examination of the body that accompanied it, the recent careful and scholarly biographer of St. Cuthbert (archbishop Eyre, of Glasgow) tells us there exists a mass of information, much of which is quoted by him in his exhaustive work. Three times the contents of the loculus containing the remains were examined before being finally deposited in the shrine—the first time on August 24, 1104; the second time on the day following,

* Marmion.

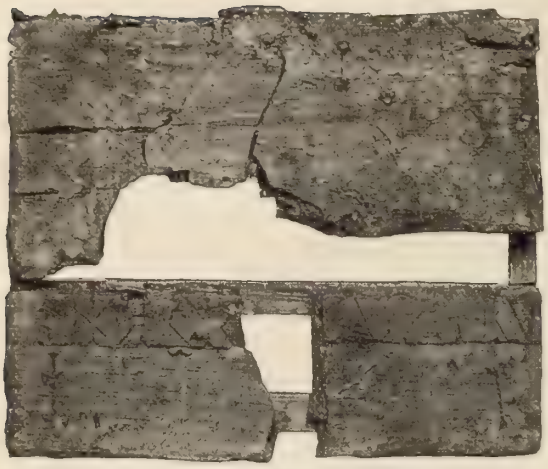
August 25, to satisfy the bishop of Durham, the well-known Ralph Flambard, who considered it altogether incredible that a human body, however holy, should remain free from corruption for 418 years; the third time—four days later—to remove from the public mind any shadow of doubt.

Nine monks, with the prior, were selected to conduct the first examination. They found a chest covered with leather; within the chest a coffin of wood enclosed in a coarse linen cloth. In this coffin rested the body. It was lying on its right side wholly entire, flexible in its joints, and resembling a person asleep rather than dead. By the body were many saints' relics—amongst them the head supposed to be that of Oswald, the Northumbrian king, slain by Penda at the battle of the Maserfield in the year 642. The reason for the body being laid on its side was evidently to allow room for the head and the other relics.

To satisfy bishop Ralph Flambard, the coffin was again opened on the following day, the body was taken out, and laid reverently in the choir upon cloths and carpets. Its first covering was a costly robe, below this a purple dalmatic, then a linen sheet, all of which were entire and clean, retaining their original freshness. The body was found to be incorrupt and the flesh firm. By the body was found an ivory comb and scissors, a little silver altar, a corporal and a paten, together with a small but costly chalice.

Another examination four days later, of a still more public kind, was made under the superintendence of Ralph, abbot of Séez in Normandy, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury. Many ecclesiastics of high degree and others (in all, more than forty) were present. A very careful and minute examination confirmed the previous report. The most interesting detail preserved of the last examination, relates how a very fine cloth covered the saint's cheeks and face; this cloth adhered closely, as though it had been glued to the hair, skin and temples. The bystanders, however, touched parts of the body not so covered, and saw the bare flesh; where they touched, they found the flesh soft. The vestments alluded to, in which the saint was wrapped, were very beautiful, of a reddish purple that was not known in those days (A.D. 1104); very fine figures of animals and flowers were interwoven in the stuff. The extremities of the dalmatic were embroidered with a faded golden tissue; his hands were resting on his chest as though in prayer. The body was reverently replaced in the coffin, and laid in the rich shrine prepared for it. The shrine was supported, we read, by nine stone pillars, and lamps were ever kept burning around it.

No further opening of the coffin is related until the year 1537, when the shrine was defaced and plundered by the Royal Commissioners of Henry VIII. The coffin was then rudely broken open, and in forcing the lid one of the legs of the body was broken. The commissioners reported that the body was still whole and uncorrupt. No further sacrilege seems to have been attempted. The body was carried into the vestry, where it was "close and safely" kept until the king's pleasure was known, when the prior and the monks buried the remains again under the spot where the shrine had stood. It



PART OF PORTABLE ALTAR FOUND IN ST. CUTHBERT'S COFFIN.
(*From photo by C. P. MacCarthy, Esq.*)

probably remained in the vestry nearly all the year.

In the year 1827 the blue slab which covered the traditional place of reinterment after the desecration of the shrine by the commissioners of the king in 1537, was taken up, and the grave carefully searched. Beneath the plain blue slab were found the crumbling remains of three very ancient coffins—one of which had been elaborately carved — a collection of human bones loosely huddled together, and *the skeleton of a man* swathed in fragments of at least five silk robes in the last stage of decay; one certainly of these must have been a very splendid piece of embroidered silk. A few articles of deep interest were found among the remains, close to the skeleton, including a small silver portable altar, a gold pectoral cross set with a large garnet, a rich embroidered stole, two bracelets of gold tissue, some fragments of fine gold wire, and an ivory comb of a reddish tinge.*

Was this skeleton the remains of the body of St. Cuthbert? Archbishop Eyre of Glasgow answers emphatically—No. For there has long been a tradition that the body of St. Cuthbert was removed from that grave to some other part of the church. The secret of his present resting-place is said to be confided to a select number of the English Benedictines. The archbishop categorically states, from what was told him *by one of the Benedictines in possession of the secret*, that the grave is known by several members of their order, who possess a plan of the cathedral with the marked spot. "There is no doubt," sums up the learned prelate from whose exhaustive work we have

ANOTHER PART OF THE PORTABLE ALTAR.
(*From photo by C. P. MacCarthy, Esq.*)

* The photographs of these relics are published by special permission of the Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral.

quoted,* "that the carved coffin discovered in 1827 was the identical coffin of St. Cuthbert, but the skeleton found was not that of the saint; that the body of St. Cuthbert was removed by the men who had, before the suppression of the abbey of Durham, been Benedictine monks of the Durham monastery, and who had subsequently received the appointment of secular canons of the cathedral; that this removal of the saint's body took place between 1553 and 1558, in the reign of queen Mary. In the search of 1827 an opening was found in the masonry at the end of the vault, filled up with loose stones. Through this opening the body of the saint was no doubt removed to its present resting-place in the great cathedral, the secret of which is only known to a few chosen members of the Benedictine order."

* "The History of St. Cuthbert," by Archbishop Eyre of Glasgow.

The story of Cuthbert has been told at some length, as illustrating quite a different phase of Christian life to that exhibited by the events in the stirring lives of Theodore and Wilfrid. History too often alone busies itself with public events, and says but little about the work which is done in silence and in secret in the scholar's study, or in the homes of the people; but the influence of Christianity received a great and notable impulse, as we have pointed out, during the last half of the seventh century, from the labours and examples of men like Cuthbert and his disciples. That beautiful and quiet life is a fitting prelude to the literary aspects of the work of the Anglo-Saxon Church in England.

GOLD PECTORAL CROSS FOUND IN ST. CUTHBERT'S COFFIN
(From photo by C. P. MacCarthy, Esq.)

Photo: Poulton & Son, London.

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, JARROW.

CHAPTER XIII.

LITERATURE AND ART IN THE EARLY ENGLISH CHURCH.

Distinct Schools of Literature in the North and South of England—The Southern a Latin School—Aldhelm of Malmesbury—Influence of his School in favour of Roman Christianity—Life and Work of Benedict Biscop—His influence upon Ecclesiastical Art and Building—Bede—Life of a Monk-Scholar—Works of the "Father of English Learning"—His Letter on Ecclesiastical Abuses—Last Days and Death—The English Poems of Northumbria—Egbert, Archbishop of York—His famous School—His successor, Archbishop Albert—Alcuin—Influence of English Learning upon the Continent—Decay of the York School and final Ruin by the Danes.

WHILE in Northumbria (including Yorkshire), an important literature had grown up under the protection and encouragement of the great Christian teachers among the partly christianised Engle conquerors—notably in monastic centres like the house of Hilda at Whitby (Streoneshalch), where the first English poems were composed—a similar movement was taking place in the south-east of the island, also fostered by the Christian monks and priests who were at work in the southern and south-eastern kingdoms of England.

In the north the literature was mainly of pure native growth. The poets were *Engles*, the language they wrote in was *English;* the thoughts, the imagery, were evidently belonging to and drawn from Northumbria, and the seas which washed its iron-bound coast. Its very theology was, as we have seen when briefly noticing the poems of Cædmon and his followers, strangely coloured with northern ideas. In this national Engle poetry, for instance, Noah's Ark is "a mickle sea-chest." The water of the Flood is "the swart water," "the waves of death." Abraham, the Oriental sheikh, is described as a Hebrew earl (eorl) surrounded by

war comrades. The description of Old Testament Eastern cities would pass for a sketch of York in the eighth century. The angel who talks with Hagar is a thane of glory; Pharaoh of the Exodus, who pursued after the Israelites as they left Egypt, is modelled upon well-known Engle or Mercia kings. Even in the picture which these first English poets drew of Christ—whom in their way they adored with as true an adoration as did any of the great Catholic teachers in the east or west—we recognise the northern ideal, and they cannot help, in their portrait of the Redeemer, painting in many of the features of typical northern heroes like Beowulf. Christ is spoken of as the Holy Hero — the Ætheling, surrounded by angels and archangels, His thanes.

Far different was the literature which in this wonderful age of extraordinary progress and rapid development flourished in the south and south-eastern portions of England. The dates of this literary movement are well-nigh identical in the south and in the north. The last thirty years of the seventh century witnessed the rise and progress of both the schools. But while in the north it was largely of native growth, in the south of the island it has been well termed an exotic; and—as might naturally be expected, lacking as it did well-nigh all national elements—its duration in the south was much shorter. In the north it lasted, roughly speaking, for a hundred years; in the south, perhaps for only about half a century.

It began in the south when the two old men, Theodore and his friend Hadrian, arrived from the East in Canterbury, commissioned by Rome to take charge of and to organise the Church in England, in 669. The first important work undertaken by the two friends—the archbishop and the scholar—was to establish a school of learning in St. Augustine's Abbey at Canterbury. Benedict Biscop took charge of it at first, but soon gave place to Hadrian. Rapidly the school grew; many came from Ireland as well as from different parts of England. "Streams of knowledge," Bede tells us, "daily flowed from Theodore and Hadrian to water the hearts of their hearers." There were classes held in this famous school especially for church music and theology and canon law; but secular subjects were by no means neglected by the teachers appointed by the archbishop and his scholar companion. We hear of arithmetic and astronomy and medicine being taught there. Greek and even Hebrew instruction was given in this early Canterbury school. Latin was especially cultivated; and if we may judge from letters we still possess, written by Aldhelm, bishop of Sherborne and abbot of Malmesbury, and Boniface, the foreign missionary who was trained at Canterbury, to some of their friends in the religious houses, Latin was a familiar tongue among many of both sexes who came under the influence of the Canterbury teachers. Thus the city of Augustine in Kent became in the last quarter of the seventh century not only a centre of scholarship, but a producer of books and writings; and from this time onward there was no need to seek for learned foreigners to fill the bishops' seats in English dioceses, or for foreign instructors. England now possessed her own scholars.

But while the literature of Northumbria

and the north was mainly English, in the southern kingdoms it was almost entirely Latin. We have no difficulty in assigning the causes which led to this devotion to Latin letters. The great school in Canterbury, which gave that strange impulse to learning, owed its inspiration entirely to

Photo: K. Wilkinson, Trowbridge.
DOORWAY AT BRADFORD-ON-AVON.

Rome and Italy; and it was natural that the influence of Rome should be directed to making Latin alone the language of learning and art. Its teachers were men trained wholly under the influence of Rome; and it was part of the policy of that great church to make its language the language of poetry, of history, and of science, as well as of theology. It rather discouraged the development of English and national thoughts. Such policy was part of the long struggle between Romish and Celtic Christianity.

In Northumbria it was different. There the influence of Aidan and Cuthbert and their disciples, even after the Roman victory at the Council or Synod of Whitby was won, remained very great, and the weight of powerful thought-leaders like Hilda, for years after the Whitby decisions, was thrown into the Celtic party. Cædmon wrote his popular religious poetry in Hilda's house, and the songmen who followed him were more or less brought up in the loved traditions of the same school. Not a few of the princes and nobles of the north were brought up at Iona, or under the care of the disciples of Aidan and Cuthbert and the men of Lindisfarne, whose influence for years was paramount in Northumbria. They and the people who lived under their government and influence would care comparatively little for Rome and Latin learning. Cædmon and his English songs had stormed their hearts; Cædmon's pupils had translated the beautiful and touching stories of the Old and New Testament into language and imagery which, as we have seen, the Engle and the Norseman understood and appreciated. Before Bede, the scholar-teacher of the monastery of Jarrow, began to teach, and the pupils of Bede to influence thought in the north, the Engle dweller in these countries had come to love with a passionate love the songs of Cædmon in their own native tongue—songs intensely English. There was no room in their hearts for the comparatively cold and foreign poetry of Rome and Italy.

Then again, long before Wessex in the

south had become a great power, Northumbria and the Engles were already a mighty and united people ; already proud of their national poetry, which in a way was otherwise. There, before Wessex became a really united power, Latin Christianity had become universally dominant, and was able to mould the literature of the

Photo : R. Wilkinson, Trowbridge.

ALDHELM'S CHURCH AT BRADFORD-ON-AVON.

was the outcome of their national glory and power. In Northumbria's age of greatness Celtic Christianity had not been supplanted by Italian Christianity ; and Celtic Christianity, so powerful in the north, was naturally opposed to everything that came from Rome. In the south of England it new kingdom after its own liking. So in the south of the island Latin became naturally the language of poetry and of scholars ; while in the north, where the influence of Rome was too late, happily, to affect the popular taste, a great school of English poetry—the poetry of Cædmon

and Cynewulf and of many other songmen whose names have perished—flourished for a long period, and held its own among the people for more than a hundred years.

The most eminent scholar of the school of Canterbury was Aldhelm. It is said that he gathered into himself all the learning of the time. A little picture of his life and work will give reality to our account of this really marvellous development of literature in the half-barbarian, half-pagan England, at the close of the seventh century.

Aldhelm was born somewhere in the middle of the century, and was a kinsman of the royal family of Wessex. A wandering monkish scholar from Ireland—not an uncommon figure in England or on the continent of Europe in that age—named Mailduf, built himself a hermitage in the forest land on the borders of Wessex and Mercia, in what is now known as Wiltshire, near an old royal home of a British chieftain. The solitary—no mean scholar—attracted pupils from the neighbourhood; the little school grew into a community. Among these disciples of the Irish wanderer was the young Aldhelm, who became one of his devoted pupils. Aldhelm certainly owed his early training and his love for study to this Irish scholar.

From the rude house and primitive community of Mailduf—named after its founder, Mailduf's-burgh, Malmesbury—Aldhelm betook himself to the Canterbury school, then growing rapidly into fame, and from Hadrian and Theodore derived that passion for intellectual studies which in later years made Aldhelm's name illustrious throughout England, and even far away on the continent of Europe. He never forgot, when he had become famous, the deep obligation he was under to the two old men who inspired the Canterbury schools. Long years after, the world-renowned scholar thus wrote to his old and venerated master, Hadrian: "It is you, my beloved, who have been the venerated teacher of my rude youth; it is you I embrace with all the ardour of a pure love, ever longing intensely to return to you." The young scholar became a professed monk, and returned to his first master and teacher Mailduf; whose school became another centre of learning. Under this Mailduf he taught the Wiltshire community for many years; and when the old Irish master died he was chosen superior of the House of Malmesbury—Mailduf's-burg.

His learning and acquirements seem to have been prodigious. Some of his writings still remain to us. Latin was his special subject: he wrote Latin verse with ease, and composed a long treatise on Latin prosody. He was acquainted with all the great classical writers, and quoted with familiarity Horace, Lucian, Juvenal, Persius, Terence; but his great learning was by no means limited to Latin scholarship. He could speak Greek, and he read with ease the Hebrew Scriptures. A lover of church architecture, he filled Dorset, Wilts, and Somerset with monastic buildings, some of them possessing churches of no mean merit. The little church (ecclesiola) recently discovered and unearthed by the patient, tireless work of an antiquarian scholar at Bradford-on-Avon, is supposed with good reason to be a bit of Aldhelm's work, and remains unharmed after nearly 1,200 years. It is "the

one perfect surviving old English church in the land. The ground-plan of Aldhelm's little church is absolutely untouched, and there are no mediæval insertions at all. So perfect a specimen of primitive Romanesque is certainly unique in England—we should not be surprised if it is unique of its own kind in Europe." *

The literary work of this renowned scholar well exemplifies the character of the school of which he was the distinguished pupil. His verses, scholarly and curious, often degenerate into a fantastic pedantry; pompous and full of rhetorical tricks, they were by no means calculated to seize the fancy, or in any way to attract the Saxon and Engle folk, who after the conquest had settled in the lands of the Britons. They obtained no permanent influence in the hearts of the English. His prose writings, too, like his verse, are destitute of any special charm or brilliancy. Aldhelm was an admirable instance of the scholar and thinker produced by the Italian school of Canterbury. No wonder that this strange outburst of literary industry and power never obtained any real hold upon the affections of the North-folk, but quickly died down again and was forgotten, soon after the famous masters first commissioned by Rome had passed away.

But Aldhelm was more than an indefatigable classic scholar. One of his later biographers terms him a great monk—one who divided his life between study and prayer. "When I read," he once said, "it is God who speaks to me; when I pray it is to God that I speak." Probably owing to his early training under, and years-long association with, the Irish monk Mailduf, he was in the habit of imposing upon himself some of those extraordinary and terrible penances which were not uncommon among the more austere of the Celtic monks in Ireland, at Iona, or at Lindisfarne, such as we frequently hear of in the life-story of Columba, Aidan, and Cuthbert. For instance, Aldhelm would, in winter as in summer, plunge during the night into a fountain hard by the monastery, immersed to the neck, till he had said the psalms of the day. The fountain long retained his name, and the memory of his wonderful austerities.

Another and a pleasanter memory of this great and singular man preserved by William of Malmesbury, is a story related by king Alfred. Alfred loved to tell how Aldhelm won men to love sacred things by taking his stand at a public place, such as on a bridge at fair times and such seasons, and singing English songs to the people. Nor did these popular songs of the great minstrel die. William of Malmesbury, writing in the twelfth century, tells us how one of these popular lays was still commonly sung in England. Aldhelm evidently felt that the classic imitations which he loved so well found no echo in the hearts of the English people; hence his efforts to originate a more popular style of song. But of these folk-songs, beyond their pleasant memory, we hear little or nothing in that cold and polished literature which emanated from the Italian teachers of Canterbury.

To the great communities of women which were springing up in his day in different parts of England, he paid much attention; and his powerful influence

* Professor Freeman.

no doubt promoted a real zeal for study in these important centres of religious life. He evidently induced these holy women in innumerable cases to devote a considerable portion of their lives to study. Indeed, a knowledge of the Latin language was evidently a very common possession in these famous female communities. Some of his letters and poems are addressed to abbesses and great personages; others to nuns and sisters whose names are not given.

The famous female monastery of Barking was a house, for instance, in which Aldhelm took the deepest interest. The abbess of this convent was Hildelida, of whom Bede writes in terms of high praise. A close intimacy evidently existed between this saintly woman and the great Wessex scholar. It was to her and her beloved community that Aldhelm dedicated his well-known work in "Praise of Virginity," written in the first instance in prose, and afterwards rewritten in stately Latin verse. The last lines of the dedication of this treatise, addressed to the nuns of that well-known holy house, are of rare beauty, and breathe of devoted piety. "Help me, then," he thus wrote, addressing Hildelida and her nuns, "dear scholars of Christ: let your prayers be the reward of my work; and as you have so often promised me, may your community be my advocates before the Almighty. Farewell, you who are the flowers of the Church, the pearls of Christ, the jewels of Paradise, the heirs of the celestial country, but who also are my sisters according to monastic rule, and my pupils by the lessons which I have given you." With these nuns, named and nameless, he kept up a constant correspondence, in which the Latin tongue was evidently generally used. This shows that a very considerable culture existed in these female communities of the seventh and eighth centuries in England, a period too often considered illiterate and semi-barbarous. A good example of his graceful, loving, though somewhat turgid and exaggerated epistolary style is the close of his letter to one Osgitha, "his most beloved sister—ten times beloved, aye, a hundred, a thousand times beloved," "Vale decies dilectissima, imo centies et millies." The letter to which this affectionate and playful conclusion was written was on the subject of the Holy Scriptures, in which he urges upon Osgitha a deeper study.

For thirty years the eminent pupil of Theodore and Hadrian was abbot of Malmesbury; and to Aldhelm and his work there may fairly be ascribed all the future greatness of this renowned house. It continued to be one of the principal monasteries of England—and indeed of Europe—for several hundred years. The stately abbey of Malmesbury, still stately, even in its ruin and decay, occupies the site of Aldhelm's great church, which seems to have rivalled Wilfrid's pile at Hexham in magnificence, and is a fitting and an enduring memorial of the work of this great disciple of the Roman school; though in its famous title of Malmesbury —Mailduf's-burg—it has strangely borne through the many storied centuries of its existence the almost forgotten name of Aldhelm's first master, the poor wandering Irish monk, Mailduf.

During the long period of the rule of Aldhelm—some thirty years—an immense

ALDHELM PRESENTING "DE VIRGINITATE" TO HILDELIDA, ABBESS OF BARKING, AND HER NUNS.

From the dedication page preceding and contemporary with the MS. of the work (8th or 9th Century).

(Lambeth Palace Library. By special permission.)

crowd of monks and students are said to have been attracted to its schools, which well and ably carried on and propagated through Wessex the teaching and traditions of Rome as expounded by Hadrian at Canterbury. As a literary school, its influence lasted but a short time after the death of its great abbot and master, for the reasons above dwelt upon; but its influence as a school for the propagation of the Roman tradition, and Roman rites and customs, endured. For the real work of Aldhelm and his house of Malmesbury was the stamping out well-nigh every vestige of Celtic Christianity in the west and south of England, and the substitution in its place of what is generally known as Roman Christianity. In the story of the Church of England, Aldhelm will ever take rank with Wilfrid, Theodore, and Hadrian, as one of the four devoted and able disciples of Rome who put down what was called with scant fairness "the Celtic schism."

It is as abbot of Malmesbury and master of its famous school, that Aldhelm will ever be best remembered, although in the late evening of his busy, industrious life he received the dignity of the episcopate and the charge of the vast diocese of Sherborne, which virtually was co-extensive with Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wilts, and Berks. King Ina separated this vast province from the original diocese of Winchester, which was, in fact, in the first instance co-extensive with the entire Wessex supremacy; but Christianity in many districts in the south and west had as yet made comparatively but little way, and much of Aldhelm's work was rather of a missionary than of an organising character. A long line of twenty-five bishops of Sherborne followed Aldhelm. Soon after the Conquest Sherborne ceased to be the seat of a bishopric, Herman, the last prelate, removing the see to Old Sarum. In 1139 bishop Roger, of Sarum, founded a Benedictine abbey there, and the cathedral became the church of the monastery. At one period as many as 300 Benedictine monks dwelled there; but its fortunes were very fluctuating. The present stately minster on the site of the ancient cathedral is one of those beautiful piles, rich not only in associations which extend over nigh 1,200 eventful years, but famous for its varied architectural styles—Norman, Decorated, and Perpendicular—so dissimilar in their design and ornamentation, but which, when grouped together as in the great Sherborne Minster, produce an effect at once harmonious and exquisitely beautiful. Sherborne and Malmesbury will ever be inseparably connected with the memory of the great Saxon scholar and teacher, Aldhelm. When Aldhelm accepted this vast episcopal charge, he wished the monks of Malmesbury and the daughter houses over which he ruled to elect a successor; but among the monks of Malmesbury so great was the devotion to his person, that the community insisted on his remaining their abbot and superior, although he had become the bishop of far-reaching Wessex.

One of the notable acts of Aldhelm, and one that bore fruit centuries after he had passed away, was the peculiar privilege he obtained from Rome for his great abbey of Malmesbury. It was, with all its dependencies, for ever to be independent of all royal and episcopal control, subject alone to the see of Rome, under whose special protection it was placed. A some-

what similar charter of exemption from ordinary jurisdiction is said to have been obtained by that disciple of Rome, bishop Wilfrid, for the great Mercian abbey of Peterborough or Medehamstede, in the centre of England, about the year 680, from Pope Agathon. These notable instances of charters of exemption from all ordinary royal and episcopal jurisdiction in the cases of the two great monasteries of Mercia and Wessex were in later days, as we shall see, largely repeated; with the effect of planting throughout England powerful fortresses of ecclesiastics wholly devoted to Rome, and more or less alienated from the national life of the land. This became in time one of the abuses of the monastic orders, and contributed in no small degree to their eventual downfall in England; and may be reckoned as among the causes which eventually led to the great Reformation of the Church in England in the sixteenth century.

Aldhelm survived his promotion to the episcopate only about four years. His new duties seem to have put an end to his student life, for he spent his time in continual journeys through his vast diocese, preaching to his people, we are told, continually, day and night. The year 709 was a fatal year to the three famous apostles of the Roman obedience. Theodore, worn out with years and never-ending toils, had passed to his rest long before. The three survivors, Wilfrid, Hadrian, and Aldhelm, all died in the same year (A.D. 709). Aldhelm died as he would have desired—in harness, working to the last. Death came upon him suddenly in the course of one of his journeyings. In the little wooden church of Dulting in Somerset, where he was preparing to preach, the end came. His attendants, as he desired, laid the devoted bishop in the church where he hoped to minister; and the stone on which he laid his dying head was shown to reverent pilgrims long after the saint had passed to his well-won rest.

This was an age of distinguished men; of great and powerful warrior kings like Oswiu and Egfrid; of eminent and devoted churchmen like Theodore and Wilfrid; of pious and enthusiastic bishops and monks, preachers and saints, like Eata and Cuthbert, Chad and his brother, John of Beverley, and Acca; of saintly and influential women like Hilda and Ebba, Etheldreda and Hildelida; of scholars like Hadrian and Aldhelm, Benedict Biscop and Adamnan, and, chiefest of all, Bede; of great poets like Cædmon, and the nameless writers of his school of vernacular song. No other age can be cited, no other country instanced, like the age which followed the coming and settlement of the North-folk, and the England after this great conquest, in which so many really great men appeared. This was the period of the making of the Church of England; it roughly included 100 years—A.D. 650 to A.D. 750.

While in the south of England Theodore and Hadrian, and their famous disciple Aldhelm, were quietly but effectually replacing the old forms and ritual of Celtic Christianity by Roman uses and rites, and endeavouring to introduce the Latin language and a taste for Italian or classic literature among the monasteries and the people under their influence, in Northumbria and the northern portion

of England a yet more remarkable development of church life and of literary vigour must be chronicled. We have already spoken at some length of that strange rise and rapid progress of a native school of poetry, which began with the Engle poet Cædmon; we have shown how powerfully his religious poems and songs influenced the Engle settlers of Yorkshire and the northern districts. But alongside of this native school of song grew up also an Italian or Latin literature of great beauty and power, perhaps more appreciated long after the great writers had passed away, than in the age in which they flourished. In later times the works of Eddius, Adamnan, and more especially Bede, were read and deeply valued, while the poems and songs of Cædmon and his disciples, which in their own day and time so deeply moved the hearts of the Engle folk, were comparatively speaking neglected, if not entirely forgotten.

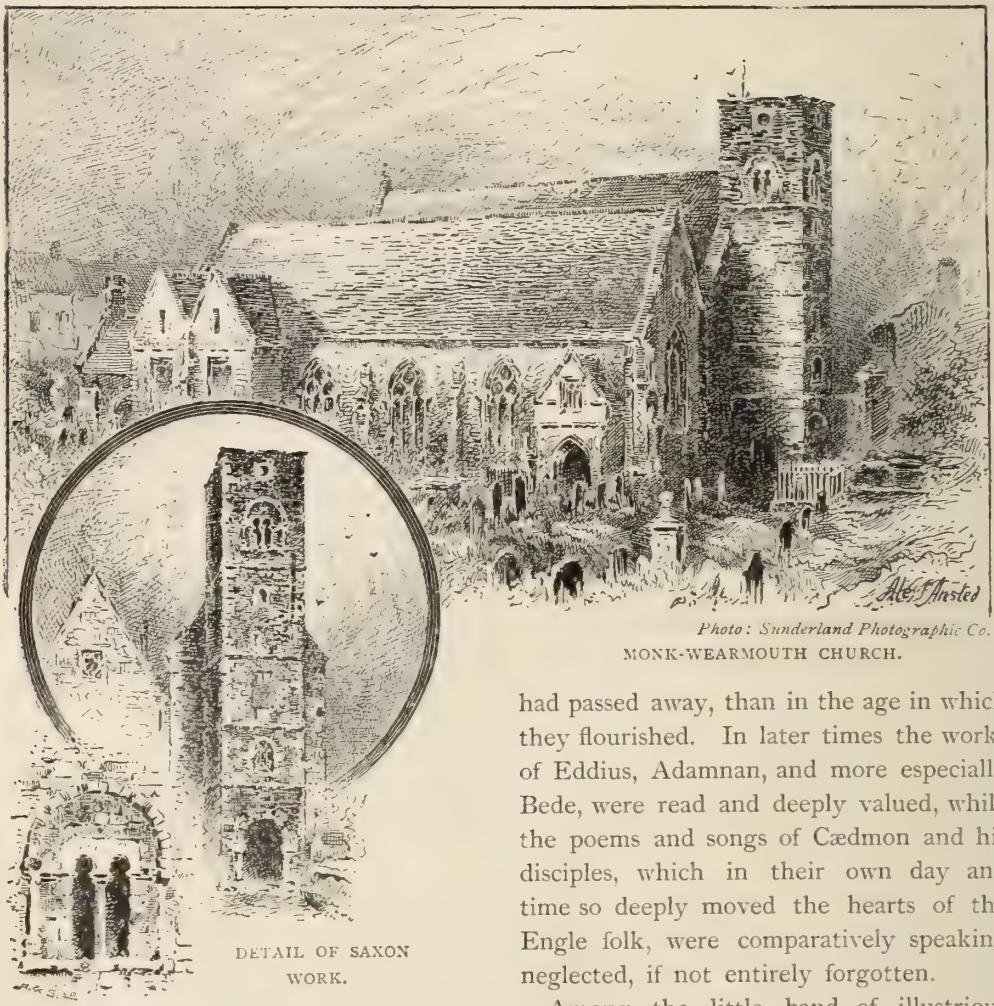


Photo: Sunderland Photographic Co.
MONK-WEARMOUTH CHURCH.

DETAIL OF SAXON WORK.

Among the little band of illustrious Northumbrian scholars who so powerfully influenced the growth of Church life during the second half of the seventh century, the name of Benedict Biscop stands pre-eminent. In after-ages the story of this indefatigable church worker has been a

good deal lost sight of. Cædmon, the Engle poet, and, in the south of England, Aldhelm, whose eventful story we have just told; Eddius, the biographer of Wilfrid; Adamnan, the chronicler of Columba's saintly life; Bede, the historian, who lived a few years later, the father of English history, left behind them written works —many of them still with us—which have kept alive their memory all along the many centuries. But Benedict Biscop, though a great scholar, was not a writer, and leaving nothing behind him, has died out of the memory of most men; and yet in his own time, with the exception of Aldhelm, he exercised probably a greater influence in the building up of the Church of England than any of these better known names.

He was, perhaps, the greatest traveller of his generation; the man who may be said in a great measure to have familiarised the North-folk with the architecture, the painting, the church music, the knowledge of the arts of gold work and embroidery, the varied learning, of Italy and Gaul. It was owing to him largely, that eminent church builders like Wilfrid and Aldhelm were enabled to raise and to adorn their noble and sumptuous churches of Hexham, Ripon, and York, and the stately pile of Malmesbury in the south. In a very few years after their having been placed in the libraries of his houses of Wearmouth and Jarrow, Bede, the scholar-monk, drew largely from this precious store of books collected by Benedict Biscop in his travels, materials for his immortal history. The literary activity which distinguished Northumbria for more than a century would, indeed, have been impossible without the libraries founded by, and largely furnished through the unwearied pains and care of this true lover of books, Benedict Biscop. As a teacher, although manifestly inferior to Hadrian of Canterbury, Aldhelm of Malmesbury, and Bede of Jarrow, he occupies no mean place among the masters of the fast-growing English church. As a founder of great monasteries famed for their discipline, piety, and learning, he ranks also very high. As an unwearied advocate and a successful teacher of the Romish traditions and uses, as opposed to the ancient Irish and Celtic customs, he is second to none in that age of sharp conflict between the two churches which contended so long and bitterly for supremacy in our island; and the eventual victory of Rome is largely owing to Benedict Biscop's ceaseless scholar-work, and to the far-reaching influence he had obtained over the popular mind as a man of letters and profound research.

This very distinguished monk was born about the year 628, a few years before his great contemporary, and companion in his earlier years, bishop Wilfrid. He belonged to an illustrious family in the Engle nation, and began life occupying a post in the household of the powerful Northumbrian sovereign, Oswiu. Like so many noble Engles of his time, he was when quite young convinced of the truth of that Christianity which at that juncture possessed in England so many eloquent and impassioned teachers and preachers, and resolved to give up secular life and to dedicate himself to the service of God and His Christ. A visit he paid to Rome determined his views respecting the special form of Christianity to which he would consecrate his powers.

The sights of Rome—its splendid and soul-stirring ritual, its glorious homes of prayer, its countless traditions, its libraries, the use which the church of Italy and Rome made of architecture, music, painting, and sculpture as the handmaids of religion—had a powerful effect upon the impressionable and ardent young Northumbrian thane. He would teach his fellow-countrymen a better way of worshipping their Christ; he would build them nobler temples than the rude straw-thatched oratories and poor wooden churches and wattled chapels of Iona and Melrose and Lindisfarne. Twice more at least, when still young, he visited Rome, which possessed a peculiar and ever-growing attraction for the young and ardent scholar. In the vast and renowned monastery of Lerins he dwelt some time, observing closely and learning the life of a great Roman monkish community; nor could he have chosen a fitter temporary home and school than Lerins, which occupied then a foremost place among the monasteries of the west, being distinguished equally for its learning as for its rigid rule and its fervid piety. There he assumed finally the monastic habit.

By this time the Engle disciple of Christianity had become well known as a scholar-monk of rare ability, devoted to Rome and her traditions; and when Theodore was chosen as the archbishop of Canterbury, and was entrusted with the great charge of organising the Church in England, Benedict Biscop was selected by Pope Vitalian to accompany Theodore to England as his trusted adviser and companion. This was in the year 669. Archbishop Theodore entrusted him at first with the superintendence of the monastic school at Canterbury, where for two years he presided with the rank of abbot over the house and school of St. Peter, better known as St. Augustine's Abbey. When Hadrian, one of the greatest scholars of the time, the intimate friend of archbishop Theodore, arrived in England to take up the important work of education, Benedict Biscop left Canterbury and St. Augustine's, and for a fourth time visited Rome and Italy; whence he returned to his native Northumbria with a rich store of books and relics and other treasures dear to churchmen. He won the heart of king Egfrid, who presented him with a great estate in Northumbria, upon which the travelled scholar founded his first famous religious community at the mouth of the river Wear. This house, dedicated to St. Peter, was known as Wearmouth—Monk-Wearmouth.

Benedict Biscop was now in a position to carry out the dream of his life, and determined to erect for his new community a church which should reproduce in wild Northumbria on the banks of the Wear, a lordly house of God, such as he had seen and worshipped in on the shores of the historic Tiber. To him a long and dangerous journey was nothing; so he started for Gaul, and, probably from the southern provinces bordering on the Mediterranean, where noble Roman buildings were still in the course of erection, he brought skilled stone-masons (cæmentarii), cunning artists in marble and stone, men skilled in glass-making, and other workers capable of building and adorning such a church as he determined to erect upon the lands given him by his friend

king Egfrid. These crafts were all utterly unknown in the England of the Northmen conquerors. The fact that architecture and its kindred arts had no place in the early period of the Anglo-Saxon rule in England, shows how completely Roman training and learning had perished in Britain ; and yet before the Saxon conquest the land had been covered with great cities, adorned with many noble buildings, rich with every possible adornment of painting and of sculpture. The poor, sad relics of the time before the conquest of the North-folk, uncovered now year after year in all parts of our island—buried cities like Silchester, lordly villas, huge fortified places, mighty temples—are continually reminding us of what Roman Britain once was before the coming of the Northmen ; but when Benedict Biscop was building his splendid Wearmouth church, the very tradition of building and adorning buildings had perished, and he had to seek workmen and artists from the distant provinces in southern Gaul and Italy.

Other arts, thanks to the unwearied perseverance of this great restorer of forgotten industries, were quickly introduced into the new England of the Northmen. The sacred vessels—some of them made of, or encrusted with, gold and silver—which he brought with him from Rome and Italy and southern Gaul, introduced into England a new taste, and, as we have before had occasion to remark, laid the foundation of a new art, afterwards pursued among the Anglo-Saxon people with rare skill. The elaborately embroidered priestly vestments and exquisitely wrought coverings for altars and shrines, which were among the treasures highly prized by the artist-monk, brought from southern lands, were imitated by the Northmen, and eventually England became positively famous for its rich and curious embroidery.

Nor were the walls of his churches allowed to remain unadorned. Skilled painters are said to have enriched these new and beautiful homes of prayer with colour and with gold, with pictures of apostle and saint, with stories from the gospel history. "The constant aim," writes Bede in the early years of the eighth century (Bede died A.D. 735), "of these pious artists was not only to decorate the churches, but also to teach the illiterate, by placing before their eyes subjects borrowed from sacred history, from the Apocalypse or from the lives of saints." Bede's words would imply that this painting the walls of monastic churches in his day was no unusual work, and was by no means confined to the Jarrow and Wearmouth religious houses. It was a strange awakening of these children of the north, who hitherto had no conception of these beautiful creations of art. It was a curious change, too, for the devoted and saintly men of Iona and Melrose, of Lindisfarne and Whitby, accustomed to the rude oratories of the Celtic saints, to assist at the worship they loved with so absorbing a passion, in these new beautiful churches, so richly adorned with sacred symbols, and to hear the same hymns and psalms they had sung and said so often with the rough and monotonous chant, accompanied by a music they had never heard before. No doubt all this contributed in no small degree to the victory of Roman Christianity.

But above all things this Engle monk desired that the "religious" in his houses should read and study, and for this end he brought a vast collection of books of every kind from the Continent. He thought it an imperative necessity for every monastery to have an extensive library. His wish, too, was that peculiar attention should be paid to church music. On his return from his fifth voyage to Rome, he brought with him an eminent musician monk named John, who had acted as precentor at St.

SAXON WINDOW IN JARROW CHURCH.
(*Said to be contemporary with Bede.*)

Peter's at Rome. He placed him over his loved Wearmouth monastery to teach the Roman ceremonies. Classes were opened, too, at which the liturgy and the ecclesiastic chants were taught, and the best singers from the Northumbrian religious houses resorted thither for instruction. The rule of St. Benedict was adopted in these newly-formed communities.

King Egfrid was in entire sympathy with the great traveller, and proceeded to assign him another large estate. Benedict Biscop, with this new endowment, founded another house on the pattern of Wearmouth, a little to the north, at the mouth of the river Tyne, and dedicated it to St. Paul. He wished the church of this new house—afterwards famous under the name of Jarrow, as the life-long residence of the greatest scholar and writer of the early English Church, Bede—to be in some sort a reproduction of the Roman church of "St. Paul's outside the walls." Over Jarrow he appointed his dearest friend, Ceolfrid, another great name in those far-back days, as abbot, and associated with himself as joint abbot of Wearmouth his nephew Easterwine; but Easterwine soon died.

Worn out by his ceaseless journeys and unremitting work, this famous churchman, at once artist and scholar, while still apparently in the vigour of life, sickened of a mortal disease, which gradually paralysed his limbs. He suffered for three years, during which long period he set the noblest example of a bravely patient toiler in spite of suffering. He was unable to leave his bed; but continual services day and night were celebrated in the sick man's chamber. His often sleepless nights were passed in listening to favourite passages from the Old and New Testament. This reading was kept up by a succession of readers, who relieved each other at intervals. During this long and weary illness he would often collect a number of monks, and even of novices, round his bed, and would address to them pressing and solemn counsels, warning them to keep faithfully the strict and austere rules of their order. He especially urged them to preserve the precious library he had collected with so much care and trouble, and never to allow it to be spoiled or dispersed. The immense importance of study for the perfect monastic life, indeed, seems to have been ever before this really eminent monk. He evidently,

while prizing very highly the monastic system, to perfect which he had consecrated so many years, feared the danger and eventual ruin which idleness and want of definite occupation would surely bring upon the order he loved so well.

SINGERS RECEIVING INSTRUCTION (*p.* 260).

He died in 689, and was succeeded by Ceolfrid, his intimate friend, the abbot of Jarrow, who became on Benedict Biscop's death superior of the two houses of Wearmouth and Jarrow. The whole community of Wearmouth and Jarrow, so closely joined together, was a large one, and numbered 600 monks. The wise rule of Ceolfrid lasted altogether twenty-seven years—until the year 711. Ceolfrid played a distinguished part in the development of monastic life in Northumbria. A pupil of Wilfrid, and carefully trained in all the policy of that famous prelate, he was not only the wise abbot and worthy successor of Benedict Biscop in all his plans for

fostering the literary tastes of the vast body of monks beneath his rule, but we find him even consulted by the Pope, and by men of the rank of Naiton, king of the Picts. But his best work was, perhaps, in his own famous school, in the midst of which, during a life of unexampled literary labour, lived the greatest scholar and writer the English Church produced for several centuries—known in subsequent history as the Venerable Bede.

About the year 680 a little boy seven years of age was entrusted by his family, undistinguished folk, who lived on the lands granted by king Egfrid to Benedict Biscop, to be educated by the monks of the new religious house of Wearmouth. When, some time after the daughter monastery of Jarrow at the mouth of the Tyne was founded, Ceolfrid, the newly-appointed abbot of Jarrow, removed thither with some of the Wearmouth monks, he took the little boy Bede with him. From this time for more than half a century, Bede never left Jarrow. Very soon after Ceolfrid and his little company had taken possession of their new home, an epidemic desolated the community. All the monks who were able to sing in the choir died, except the abbot Ceolfrid and the boy Bede, who in after days relates this curiously sad experience of his child-days: how the two survivors, the abbot and the boy, as best they could, sang the services until new brethren joined them.

Bede grew up under the care of the learned Ceolfrid. At the age of nineteen he received deacon's orders, and at thirty the priesthood from the hands of St. John of Beverley. Jarrow and its quiet, peaceful life was ever sufficient for the studious young monk, who was brought up from boyhood in its walls. "I spent my whole life in the same monastery," he says, "and, while attentive to the rules of my order and the service of the church, my constant pleasure lay in learning or teaching or writing." "I ever found it sweet, this still, yet busy life," he tells us, when in later life he wrote down his early memories. It was a career perfectly uneventful as regards the great world without; he even refused, later, to accept the dignity of abbot of the community he loved so well, because he thought it would interfere with those studies which filled so completely every hour of his life.

Although, however, Bede occupied no position of special honour or rank in the church he served so nobly; although in those stirring times he was little heard of either in church or state; even then the report that a monk of extraordinary learning, and that a teacher of rare power and marvellously winning gifts, was dwelling in one of the Northumbrian monasteries, got abroad. The school of Ceolfrid, abbot of Jarrow and Wearmouth, became famous throughout England, and a crowd of pupils flocked to receive instruction at his hands. But the quiet grandeur of the great scholar's life was not really known and appreciated until long after Bede had passed away; not until his works, charming and varied, had been read and re-read by successive generations of scholars; then his name at length became indeed famous throughout western Europe. It was a strange destiny that many of his books should have so

endured, such as the "Ecclesiastical History," and the "Life of St. Cuthbert." They formed part, and no small part, of the literature of Alfred the Great; they are still the prized text-books of the early English teaching in our own great universities, at the close of the nineteenth century. Edited and re-edited in all the learned centres of Western Europe, each fresh edition even now, after 1,200 years, is eagerly welcomed and studied anew by scholars young and old, directly it appears. What, will be asked, is the peculiar charm which has won for these ancient works of the quiet monk of Jarrow this seemingly undying power?

We know something of the life led by not a few of the inmates of these great homes of study and of prayer in the seventh and eighth centuries, of which Jarrow was a fair example, and we can picture with some exactness our great scholar at his daily work. "The quiet cell, with desk at the window, a single chair at the desk, with cupboard and bed, and a chest full of manuscripts taken from the ample store laid up in the monastic library: there the monk lived and worked year after year, looking up now and then to hear the bird sing on the sill, to see the flowers in the paved cloister, or the fruit-trees blossom in the garden—a simple, happy, silent life." *

This quiet, reserved monk little by little made himself master of the whole range of the science of his time; Scriptural studies were, of course, his chief pursuit. From Trumbert, a monk who had been trained by the saintly Chad, he received his first guidance here; but Bede by no means confined his patient, loving industry to the interpretation or translation of the divine writings, though they were his first, as they were his last study. He was imbued by his learned master in these grave and holy studies with all that was pure and true in the great Celtic traditions of the interpreters of Iona and the old Irish schools; and to these he added a deep and profound knowledge of the patristic traditions preserved by the long line of the scholars of Rome, belonging to the Roman and Italian schools. With Greek learning, introduced into England by Hadrian, who taught for so many years with archbishop Theodore at Canterbury, he was intimately acquainted; while Latin was as his own tongue, and in it he wrote the great majority of his many works, with an easy grace and power which only long familiarity could give. He weaves his charming stories into the dryer narrative of his great English history with a strange attractiveness peculiarly his own.

The writings of this indefatigable scholar are very numerous, and varied in their character. They embrace astronomy, physics, and music, philosophy and geography, arithmetic and grammar. It must, however, be remembered that Bede was something more than a student and scholar; he was the master of a great and renowned school, whither resorted, besides a crowd of monks and "religious," a number of all sorts and conditions of men eager to receive instruction in the famous Jarrow school of Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrid. Thus many of his treatises partake of the nature of catechisms, or short manuals, adapted for the education of the crowds of pupils who thronged to this Northumbrian teaching centre. It will be sufficient

* Stopford Brooke, "Early English Literature."

to give the names of two or three of these diversified treatises, some of which we may suppose were written by his disciples, and only received the corrections and final touches of the great master: the "Ars Metrica," the "De Rerum Naturâ," and the "De Temporibus." His commentaries extend over almost all the books of the Bible. They are in a complete form dedicated to Acca, whom we have seen riding with Wilfrid on the occasion of his last ride to Oundle, and receiving the last intimate confidences of the renowned statesman and prelate who fills so large a place in the story of the second half of the seventh century—Acca, the bishop of Hexham, who in some respects was Wilfrid's successor, as he had been his dearest friend and confidant. But the composition of these numerous and various commentaries extended doubtless over many years.

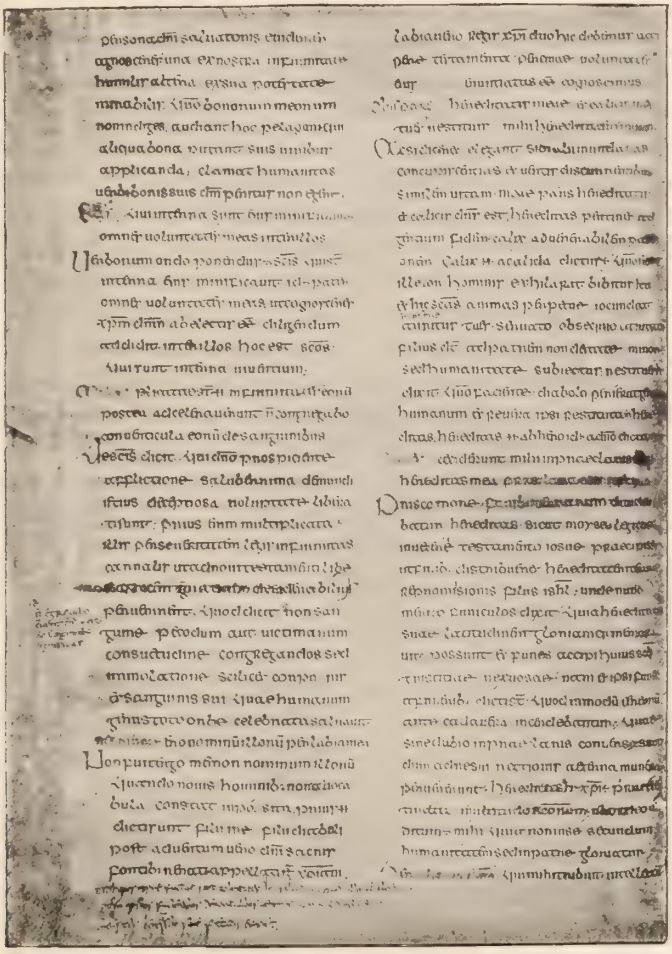
BEDE'S CHAIR (TRADITIONAL) AT JARROW CHURCH.

Bede may be looked upon not only as the father of history in England, but also as the parent of English theology. Before his day there was little written by men of the stamp of Augustine or Paulinus, Aidan or Cuthbert, Wilfrid or Chad. These men were rather great missionaries than writers, men whose lives were of necessity active rather than contemplative, whose thoughts and efforts were almost wholly occupied with the practical duties of their station. Bede's homilies—for he wrote many—and his voluminous commentaries, are largely made up of practical teachings connected with the Christian life. They have been well characterised as calm, sensible, and unaffected, a mirror of that steady piety which has made the practical religion of the English people. But the commentaries especially are coloured with a disposition towards allegorical interpretation, occasionally extravagant in its character. To Bede the whole Bible appeared as a great allegory—"Even the New Testament, the Gospels, and the Acts have their hidden and mysterious, as well as their historical signification—no word in them but enshrines a religious and typical sense."* His comments are largely made up of selections from the more popular fathers — especially those containing subtle and ingenious explanations.

But after all, it is on his "Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation" that the

* Dean Milman, "Latin Christianity."

immortal fame of Bede rests. In this great masterpiece, and in the two less known short "Lives" of St. Cuthbert of Augustine in A.D. 597 to the year 731, when the work-weary scholar closed his eventful chronicle. No pains were



PAGE FROM THE "COMMENTARY OF CASSIODORUS."
(Said to be in Bede's own handwriting. Durham Cathedral.)

and of the abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow, the peculiar charm of Bede's literary work specially comes out. In the ecclesiastical history, after a short introduction, the real work stretches over nearly a century and a half, from the landing spared by the writer in the collection of materials for his history. Of course, the story of the north of England, Northumbria, is told with more ample details than those we find in the rest of his national annals. He was a Northumbrian Engle

himself, proud of his people and their land. He ever lived in the midst of the scenery he so graphically describes, and with not a few of his heroes he had been personally acquainted; besides which, the work of the church whose early fortunes he painted was largely done by Northumbrians. The conversion of Kent by Augustine is dwelt on certainly at great length. But this is natural when we take into account Bede's interest in everything that came from Rome, and when we remember the familiar intercourse which naturally existed between the schools of Canterbury and of Jarrow. But the preaching and influence of Aidan, the wanderings and marvellous life of Cuthbert and Chad, the doings of Hilda and her mighty house, and her poet Cædmon and his works, which Bede loved well, these were the main events which fill his storied pages.

Perhaps the special charm which is felt in the history, is in the exquisite stories plentifully scattered up and down the narrative. Bede had a marvellous power in delineating character, and in picking out what was good and gracious in the man or woman of whom he was writing. To the student of that far-back age—thanks to Bede—men like bishop Aidan and the saintly Cuthbert, and Cædmon, Hilda's poet, live again. We seem to see them, we fancy we hear them speaking, they are so real and life-like; we cannot believe that twelve hundred years have elapsed since these great and lovable men passed away. He relates with intense sincerity many strange tales of his beloved heroes, and not a few miracles in which they bore a prominent part; he evidently believes in the truth of these. He gives none of these stories of the supernatural from his own personal authority as an eye-witness, but always names the persons from whom they came to him, stating whether he has received them at first- or second-hand, leaving the reader to form his own opinion as to their genuineness.

Cuthbert is evidently his favourite hero, among the many noble and saintly ones he portrays so admirably as the makers of the church he loved so passionately and served so faithfully. There is no doubt whatever that he looked upon this strange loving man as one who exercised in his time—only a few years before Bede wrote his story in his Jarrow cell—not merely human powers; who now and again saw sights which no mere mortal eye could see. For instance, when he relates how Cuthbert one day quenched a fire, he adds: "But I and those like me, who are conscious of our own weakness, can do nothing in that way against material fire;" and again he suggests the possession of supernatural influences in such a passage as, "Once the saint [Cuthbert] was vexed with a swelling in his knee, and was prescribed for in his pain by a man of noble mien, clothed in white; Cuthbert followed the stranger's advice, and got well. At once," says Bede, "he perceived that it was an angel." Nothing is more exquisite than his description of wild creatures, birds and beasts, now obeying, now ministering to Cuthbert. "We for the most part," he says, "have lost our dominion over these wild creatures, for we neglect to obey the Lord."

His stories have obtained a singular power over men's hearts, and live for

ever in our memory. Every child who knows aught of the history of his country knows well the story of Gregory in the Roman market-place, looking with loving pity on the beautiful Angle children, and the string of playful puns which came from Gregory on that occasion are as household words still among us; while the beautiful recital of the wild storm-driven bird flying through the thane's fire-lit hall on a winter's night, out of darkness and the unknown, and again into darkness and the unknown, has been told and retold a thousand times; at once a little piece of the history of the day, and an allegory which goes home to all hearts.

One singularly interesting relic of Bede's writings requires special mention, because it throws a strong light upon the abuses which, alas! only too quickly crept into that powerful and influential church which had been established among the Engle and Saxon conquerors. These abuses were handled and commented on with a very gentle, but still with an unsparing hand by Bede, in his celebrated letter (the date of the letter is about A.D. 734) to Egbert of York, the chief prelate of the Northumbrian church, in the latter years of Bede's life. Egbert was a brother of Eadbert, king of Northumbria in 737-758, and had been a pupil of Bede at Jarrow, and was not unfrequently a guest in his old master's monastery, from whom he often sought advice and counsel. A year before the great scholar's death a letter was sent from Bede to Egbert, containing counsels and general remarks on questions generally affecting the church.

From it we gather some curious and interesting information. Bede urges the bishop to establish in every hamlet and village, however remote, priests who will preach the word of God, celebrate the divine mysteries, and baptize; Bede thus recognising the need that men should be appointed as Christian priests, even in remote villages, capable of preaching and teaching. With the great Jarrow teacher, deeply as he valued the regular and frequent administration of the two sacraments —baptism and the Lord's Supper—the power to *preach* the word was a necessary gift which every priest should possess. He evidently, however, contemplated that a low standard of scholarship must be accepted for some at least of the priests, for in speaking of prayer and creed being said in English, he added, "I say this not only for the laity, but also for the clerks and monks who do not understand Latin."

Again, the advice contained in this letter to Egbert evidently presupposes a wide adoption of what we should call the parochial system. It is evident that in the wide-spreading diocese of York the outlying villages and hamlets were by no means left to the ministration of the monks of the many religious houses, but that priests appointed by the bishop were stationed among the village communities of the Engles. Although the church had been established, comparatively speaking, very few years, the same shrinking from partaking of the Holy Communion was painfully noticeable among these Engles of the first years of the eighth century, as, alas! too often is still among our English people. "Among us," writes Bede, "thanks to the carelessness of the pastors, the most religious laymen dare not communicate except at Christmas, the Epiphany,

and Easter, although there are numberless Christians, young and old, of pure life, who might without scruple approach these holy mysteries on the Sundays and feasts of the Apostles and martyrs."

He is very vehement, too, in his warnings to bishops against the love of earthly lucre. "There are many villages in the hills and woods of our native land where a bishop has never been seen; and yet these neglected flocks are taxed to pay the bishops' dues." Very suggestive is such an admonition as this, and shows us only too plainly that the Engle church, bishops and people, had in a very few years sadly fallen away from the lofty ideal of an Aidan or a Cuthbert. Against married dwellers in monasteries the scholar was very stern in his denunciation. Indeed, the whole tone of the letter to Egbert was the tone of one who feared for the future of the church; who dreaded a general falling away from the great examples who had gone before them. It was an earnest protest, as it has been termed, of "a true monk against the false monks who had already begun to infect the life of the cloister, and against the greedy and feeble bishops who sanctioned and tolerated these unworthy abuses." It contained also strenuous warnings against allowing any interference, save in the case of crimes of treason, on the part of the king or the thanes in monastic affairs, the great nobles being apparently often eager to seize upon and to appropriate the revenues of monasteries, which in many cases already, through the cultivation of lands probably originally waste, and through the lavish gifts so often bestowed upon religious houses had become exceedingly wealthy.

This "letter" to archbishop Egbert of York was written in the last year of Bede's useful and beautiful life. No story in the English tongue is more winning and attractive than the recital given to us by a certain Cuthbert, an unknown monk of Jarrow, in a letter written to an absent brother in reply to a request to tell "how Bede, our father and master, the beloved of God, departed from the world." Its strange attractiveness consists in its perfect simplicity. Plain and unadorned with anything miraculous or supernatural, its absolute truth impresses itself upon the reader. He is transported to Jarrow, and thinks he is gazing upon the little pallet in Bede's cell, where the child-like scholar and saint is dying, just worn out after a life of ceaseless work, serene and joyful now the end has come.

It was just two weeks before Eastertide, in the year 735, when the old man—old before his time—felt the end was at hand. Very weak and ailing, he would still creep into his accustomed place in the choir of the church when the hours of the many services came round. When asked to rest in his cell, and not to join in these oft-recurring meetings for prayer and song, he replied: "I know"—it is Alcuin, the minister of Charlemagne, who records the beautiful saying—"that the angels visit the canonical house and the gatherings of the brethren. What if they do not find me among the others in God's house? Will they not say, 'Where is Bede? Why does he not come with his brothers to the prescribed prayers?'"

At last, the writer of the letter tells us, as the days grew on to the time of the

Lord's Ascension, the weakness of the scholar-monk crept on, and the sickness from which he suffered became more severe; the difficulty of breathing increased, but there was no actual pain. "You desire and expect me to tell you how Bede, our father and master, departed from this world? He continued thus," wrote on Cuthbert, "until the Tuesday before Ascension—always joyous and happy—giving thanks to God every hour of the night and day. He slept but little, but continually chanted psalms, and in the intervals still gave us lessons at times. He would stretch his arms out in the form of a cross, and so pray—O happy man!—repeating now verses from St. Paul, or other Scriptures, now bits of poetry in the Engle tongue. [Memories, no doubt, of Cædmon; for he was well versed in the beautiful English poetry of Northumbria.] Sometimes we wept and sometimes we read; but we never read

DEATH OF BEDE.

without weeping. He thanked God with his own sweet touching grace for his sickness, and repeated St. Ambrose's words, 'I do not fear to die, for I have a good master.'

"On the Tuesday before Ascension the breathing became more difficult, still he would dictate to his pupils. 'Make haste,' said the dying saint, 'to learn, for I know not how long I may remain with you, or if my Creator may call me shortly.' On the Wednesday before the feast his scribe said to him, 'There is yet one chapter of your translation of the Gospel of St. John still wanting; does it trouble you to be asked more questions?' 'It is no trouble,' said Bede, 'but take your pen and write fast.' At the ninth hour he stopped dictating, and said to his scribe, 'I have some little things of value in my chest—such as pepper, napkins, incense—run quickly and bring the priests of our monastery, that I may distribute among them the gifts which God has given me.' So the day wore on; in the evening the scribe went to him again. 'Dear master,' he said, 'there is yet one sentence of the translation unwritten.' He answered, 'Write quickly.' Soon after the monk-writer laid down his pen. 'Now the sentence is finished.' 'You say truly, it is finished,' murmured the saint. 'Take my head in your arms, and turn me, for I have great consolation in turning towards the holy place' [the little oratory] 'where I have prayed so much.' Then he sang for the last time, 'Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,' and breathed his last as he pronounced the last of these divine names, and so departed to the kingdom of heaven."

Thus passed away quietly, as he had lived, one of the purest saints men had ever known; the greatest scholar of his own and of many succeeding generations, whom all agree in calling the Father of English learning. It is a pure and touching story, this often-quoted memory of his end, given by an eye-witness—a story which, as a modern writer beautifully says, "like a solemn evening landscape seen from the hill-top of a long life of faithful work, breathes so quietly the gentle and clear air of death."

It will be well now to describe more in order the wonderful early outburst of Christian literature produced under the shadow of the church in Northumbria, in which Cædmon in the last quarter of the seventh century, and Bede in the first part of the eighth century, are the earliest and most conspicuous leaders.

The sudden rise of, and reception given to vernacular poetry, has been spoken of. It was born, as we have seen, in one of those great Northumbrian double monasteries in Streoneshalch or Whitby, in the days when the abbess Hilda ruled there. Cædmon, the first recorded poet of his school, was followed by others whose names have perished, all but one, Cynewulf. The poems and songs were written by Engles in their own English tongue, and were evidently warmly received by the people, and, of course, largely influenced their life in the latter part of the seventh, and during the whole of the eighth centuries. The themes of these popular poems were mainly religious. The exceptions to the sacred poems, as far as we can judge from the remains of this great and influen-

tial literature which are preserved to us, consist in a number of so-called "Riddles," full of dramatic interest, and coloured with descriptions of Nature, and in a few allegorical poems such as the "Phœnix, the Panther, and the Whale." But the burthen of the large mass of this very early Engle poetry was religion. The remains that we have with us now consist of lengthy paraphrases of the books of the Bible, and wild legends of the saints, enlarged and woven into stories of considerable length, like the "St. Andrew." We have, for instance, a singular and striking poem of passionate religious biography founded on a dream of "the Holy Rood." To give another instance, among these remains we have a long trilogy bearing the name of Cynewulf, which treats of the mission and work of Jesus, and passes through the Incarnation and Ascension and the Last Judgment. The deep interest generally felt in Christianity throughout these North Engle lands during the last half of the seventh and much of the eighth centuries is evident from the selection by their national poets of such sacred and profound subjects as their favourite themes. This stirring literature began to be written and read in the last quarter of the seventh century, from about the year 670. "The followers of Cædmon were many," writes Bede ; and the phrase tells us there were a number of these Engle religious poems composed and current among the people before the date of Bede's death in 735.

During the first seventy or eighty years of the eighth century—roughly, until about 780—all the Engle poetry written by the followers of Cædmon—by men such as Cynewulf—was composed. In the later years of that period the glory of Northumbria had departed, and a half-sad, half-despairing spirit seems to brood over Engle poems like the "Christ" and the "Elene." Probably the "Dream of the Rood" is one of the latest written ; but not a word appears in these writings which gives a hint of the impending dreadful blow which fell upon the land at the hands of the first Viking raiders, who stormed Lindisfarne and Jarrow in 793. No Engle poem —sad though the spirit is which lives among the beautiful and moving verses of the later writers—alludes to events which horrified not only Northumbria, but which brought terror and dismay even to the heart of the great Northumbrian scholar, Alcuin, dwelling far away under the protecting shadow of Charlemagne's brilliant court on the Continent. We may therefore assume that a "silence" fell on the national school of Northumbrian poetry in the last years of the eighth century. In the ninth century, certainly, there was no literature composed in Northumbria.

While the Engle songmen were busy influencing all national life, and popularising, so to speak, Christianity among the people of all ranks and orders (for it must be borne in mind that by far the largest proportion of the vernacular poems written between 670 and 780 which are preserved to us are *religious* poems), the teaching and influence of Bede and the school of Jarrow, founded by Benedict Biscop, during some of the same period was working among the same people, and in the same direction ; only the writings of Bede for the most part were in Latin, while the poems of Cædmon and Cynewulf were written in

the Engle tongue—the national dialect of the race. Bede, however, although he must be classed as a Latin writer and as a teacher of the Roman school, had the warmest sympathy with and love for the national poetry, of which he was evidently an ardent student, and in which we know he was an accomplished scholar.

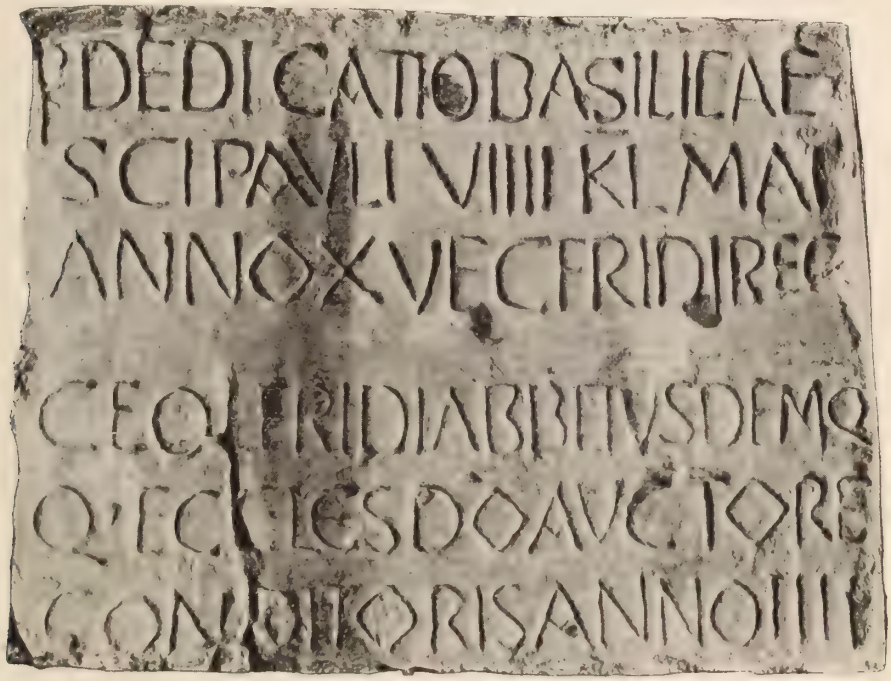
CROSS AT WHALLEY.

(*Said to commemorate a visit of Paulinus.*)

When Bede died, in 735, the school of Jarrow, celebrated far and wide throughout the island, virtually came to an end, and the seat of Northumbrian learning was transferred from Jarrow to York. Already, in Bede's lifetime, a flourishing school of learning had been established in the great Northumbrian capital, and under bishop Egbert, Bede's pupil and friend, had already become famous. Very shortly after Bede's death bishop Egbert received the pall from Pope Gregory III., and thus became the second archbishop of York. The only one of his predecessors to whom this title properly belongs is Paulinus, who, it will be remembered, after the death of Edwin, more than a century before, fled into Kent carrying his pall with him. None of the bishops of York, not even the famous Wilfrid, received this dignity again until Egbert in A.D. 735, who, probably through the influence of his family connections, received the pall from Rome, and was acknowledged as archbishop of the northern province. The commanding position of Egbert was further strengthened in 738, when his brother Eadbert became king of Northumbria.

York was a better home for the school which Bede founded, than Jarrow in the far north. Bede's loved home was remote, and, save for the presence of the famous scholar, comparatively unknown. It was a large monastery, nothing more; a group of scattered huts round the church and monastic buildings, where the scholars who resorted to the lectures of Bede lived, formed the town. Difficult of access, far away from any populous centre, when the scholar who had created the school passed away, the school naturally ceased to exist. York, under archbishop Egbert, was very different. Long before Bede's day it had been the chief

city of the northern Engles, and the Northumbrian kings made it their royal seat. It had, too, a great history, and without exaggeration might be called even an imperial city. There the emperor Severus died. There, too, Constantine was proclaimed emperor. It had been the most famous city of the Romans during



STONE OVER THE CHANCEL ARCH IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, JARROW, RECORDING THE COMPLETION OF THE BUILDING IN A.D. 685.*

(Probably a copy of the Original Stone)

their period of rule in Britain; it was a known name even on the continent of Europe. In the beginning of the eighth century, it had arisen from its ruins and was again a flourishing city, with a large and thriving population.

Egbert the archbishop, Bede's pupil and friend, to whom was addressed the celebrated letter from the dying scholar already spoken of, was admirably fitted to establish and to promote a school of learning. Although not an original thinker or a great writer like his master Bede, he was a profound scholar, with an ardent love of books and learning; and believed that the Christian religion could be best advanced among the Engle people by fostering among them a love for learning. It seems a strange, almost an incredible thing that in a remote age, among a

* In English the inscription runs: "The dedication of the basilica of St. Paul on the 9th of the Kalends of May, in the 15th year of King Egfrith, and in the 4th year of Ceolfrid, Abbot and under God founder of the said Church."

people scarcely civilised, as we should term them, many of them still pagans like their rude forefathers, such a school as Egbert's at York could have existed in the first half of the eighth century; and it is no doubt largely owing to this school, and the vast influence it exercised among the North-folk, that Christianity obtained so rapid a success, and gained so strong and permanent a hold on the affections of the conquering race. Archbishop Egbert's long unbroken rule at York, a time lasting some thirty-three years, of course contributed to the marvellous prosperity of his educational system. He had time to mature his plans, and to watch his work grow and develop.

Egbert of York was, however, something more than a powerful teacher and organiser of education. He was also a great archbishop and chief pastor, in the highest sense of the word. To him the introduction of the parochial system in the north is no doubt largely due. As we have seen in the letter Bede wrote to him in the last year of his life, under his care the building up of church life among the scattered people in the villages and hamlets of broad Northumbria, was not left to the occasional and somewhat fitful visits of monk-priests from the monasteries, but was entrusted to men who made their permanent homes among the people, dwelling among them often in remote and rarely visited districts.

Egbert was also a stern disciplinarian. The words spoken and written by that loving scholar at Jarrow, who so well grasped the dangers to which the disciples of the new religion were exposed, evidently sank deep into his heart. Some of the archbishop's rules are severe, it has been said to excess; and the penances which he prescribed for erring Christians are characterised as even frightful. The ideal he set before himself and his clergy and their flocks was doubtless an impossible one; but it was a noble conception, and his teaching and example did much to advance the cause of true religion in England.

We know a good deal of the life of this servant of Christ, who will ever occupy a distinguished place in the roll of the founders of our Church of England. Among the crowd of scholars who thronged his school at York during his protracted rule, was one who was afterwards celebrated throughout Europe as the first scholar of his time, and who, strangely enough, became in after-days the counsellor and adviser in educational matters of the monarch to whom the great destinies of the western world were entrusted — the emperor Charlemagne. Alcuin, Charlemagne's friend, received his early training from Egbert, and became, when still comparatively young, one of his principal assistants at York; and it is through Alcuin that we learn much of the inner life of Egbert and his school. In the life of Alcuin we find a picture of the daily work of Egbert in his great York monastery. "The cares of his vast diocese would occupy, of course, the first place. As soon as he was at leisure in the morning he would send for some of the young clerks, and sitting on his couch, taught them successively till noon, at which time he retired to his private chapel and celebrated mass. After dinner, at

which he ate sparingly, he amused himself with hearing his pupils discuss literary questions in his presence. In the evening he recited with them the service of compline, and then calling them in order, he gave his blessing to each as they knelt in succession at his feet."*

The school of Egbert at York was famous throughout western Europe; youths of noble birth from all parts were sent to York for instruction. Egbert himself acted as its head and principal teacher, and Albert or Ethelbert as his vice-master. The archbishop lectured on divinity, and the scarcely less famous Albert on grammar and on arts. It was with these teachers that Alcuin, the world-famous friend of Charlemagne, laid the foundation of his vast knowledge.

But great though Egbert was as a master, ceaselessly energetic and watchful as a prelate, he found time to indulge his taste for splendour and magnificence in the services of his Minster. He paid the greatest attention to the growing love for church music, and adorned his stately cathedral with the choicest work of the jeweller and the goldsmith; the figured curtains of silk of foreign manufacture, which he procured for its adornment, are specially mentioned among his gifts. In that so-called "rude" age, the arts of embroidery and of illumination of cherished manuscripts—a peculiar talent of the Celtic church—and the crafts of working in gems and gold and silver, had steadily grown in Northumbria. Monks loved to work at gorgeous bindings for their sacred books; and some of them showed rare skill in working in gold and silver. In wealthy minsters like York and Ripon and Hexham, the golden rood often gleamed with jewelled lines of ornament; while in these great homes of prayer and study the bindings of the gospels and the books used in the sacred offices were often most richly decorated with gold and silver, and even encrusted with precious gems.

Towards the end of his busy, useful life, Egbert was joined by his royal brother, Eadbert, the Northumbrian king, who laid aside his crown and sceptre, and, taking the tonsure, entered Egbert's monastery at York as a monk. The king lived nine quiet years with his brother the archbishop, who died, after ruling the great see for thirty-three years, in A.D. 766; the monk-king two years later. The brothers were laid side by side in one of the porches or little chapels of the cathedral.

Egbert was succeeded in the archbishopric and headship of the famous "York" school by his friend and coadjutor, Albert, who nobly carried on his master's work. For some time he was assisted by Alcuin, his old pupil, under the title of "magister scholarum." Albert, or Ethelbert, was even a greater teacher than Egbert, and under his wise rule the school of York rose still higher in general European estimation. He was an indefatigable collector of books. The library of York and its famous school under his rule and teaching reached its highest point, and positively gave an impulse to learning throughout all western Christendom.

Albert was also a great church builder. The York minster had in 741 been severely injured by fire. He erected what was virtually a new cathedral. His first care seems to have been the little chapel

* Raine, "Fasti Eboracenses."

in which Paulinus, the Roman missionary, had baptized king Edwin more than a hundred years before. This sacred spot, where that Christianity which had grown into such a lordly tree had been first planted, seems to have been regarded with great reverence in the Northumbrian church. The altar in this chapel he renovated with great care. All the sacred vessels and crucifixes were of silver or gold, and were inlaid with precious stones. A huge candelabrum of three branches hung over it, with a rood embossed with gold and silver. Round this sacred shrine Albert (Ethelbert) built his minster. In after-days Alcuin describes this church as a lofty temple set on pillars over the crypt, bright with ceilings and windows, apsidal chapels around, and containing thirty altars. Alcuin superintended the work with Eanbald, who was afterwards archbishop. This church seems to have remained uninjured, as some think, until the Norman Conquest.

The name of one of the illustrious scholars of York has been mentioned several times. Although in his more famous subsequent career in the train of the great Frankish emperor Charlemagne, Alcuin belongs rather to the continent of Europe than to England, still, as to his nationality he was an Engle born at York, and in his early bringing up and in his career generally during early and middle life, he belongs to England. It may be well briefly to sketch his distinguished career.

Alcuin was born about the year of Bede's death, say 734–5, within the walls of the ancient Northumbrian capital. Entrusted, like many other noble Engle boys, to archbishop Egbert, he received his training in the York school under Albert, its famous master—subsequently archbishop. Distinguished for his scholarship and evident teaching powers, Alcuin in the year 767 became the master of the school. The period of his teaching, 767–780, some twelve or thirteen years, was perhaps the age of York's greatest fame and influence at home and abroad. Returning from Rome, whither he had gone on a mission to get the pall for Albert's successor in the arch-see, he met at Pavia Charlemagne, and singularly attracted the great monarch. At that period the still young master of the famous Northumbrian seat of learning ranked as the most illustrious of European scholars. In the following year, 781–2, he joined the suite of Charlemagne finally, and at once became busied as the adviser of the all-powerful emperor in all matters concerning education and literature, in which Charlemagne was specially interested.

His story henceforth is no longer an English one, but belongs to the larger history of European progress. His work and influence under the great emperor was enormous, as a founder of schools, as "a restorer of the knowledge of the sacred languages, of the text of the Bible and Service Book, and the moral vigour of ecclesiastical discipline."

In the year 790 Alcuin again visited England and his old school, where for so many years he had been first a pupil, then its master. In two years, however, he left York for ever, and devoted himself henceforth to his great foreign work. He took with him a number of scholars who had been educated in the Northumbrian school, and constantly sent to York for

books and fresh helpers. Indeed, it is said he drained York of its best scholars.

None of this work of Alcuin on the continent of Europe is part of the story of the Church of England; but it belongs to the glory of our church, "to say that it was an English scholar of York who, exactly at the right time, bore off to the Continent the whole of English learning, and out of English learning built up a new world. . . Instead of a little and dying kingdom in the north of England, the huge Frankish dominion became the home of literature; the patron of learning was no longer a small provincial king like Eadbert (of Northumbria), with his power trembling to its fall, but the man who in a few years became the head of the holy Roman Empire; and the glory of that great title and all that it meant threw its glamour and its dignity over letters. They marched with the Empire's march, and took of its youth and energy. Alcuin of York led them, nourished them,

PAGE FROM ALCUIN'S BIBLE (*British Museum*).

established them. The seat of learning was thus no longer in England, but the new city was built with stones from England."* This is one of the works of the Church of England, and the church of York with its school—the school really of Bede—may well boast of being its founder and origin.

Eanbald, Albert's friend and coadjutor, succeeded him in 781–782. But from that time the famous school of York began rapidly to decline. Nor are the reasons for the rapid decay of this brilliant centre of Christian learning and scholarship hard to find. During the fourteen years of the rule of Eanbald things were going from bad to worse. The school lived on it is true, but its glory had faded; no assistance, as heretofore, was given by the kings and thanes to the teachers and their great church. The life of king and thane was spent in internal dissensions between rival claimants to the throne. King after king of Northumbria we read of as exiled or murdered. Four of these shadowy monarchs perished in Eanbald's sad fifteen years of rule at York. Naturally these fierce political troubles, these bloody intrigues, these murders of the highest in the realm, created a state of things in which no quiet home of learning could hope to flourish. After the fifteen years of Eanbald's rule things even grew worse. Pupils shunned distracted Northumbria. We hear during this period of anarchy and misrule, less and less of the once famous school, or of the world-famed library of the glorious minster-church. The close of the melancholy story in 827 is told with scornful abruptness in the pages of the Saxon Chronicle. "And Egbert (the West Saxon king) led an army to Dore against the North-Humbrians, and they offered him their obedience and allegiance, and with that they separated."

Nor within the church of the north, during this period of rapid decay, were things more promising. The clergy became more and more luxurious in their way of life, the parish priests lost all learning. The archbishop himself seems to have lived more like a temporal than a spiritual prince. Soldiers and courtiers attended him as he went about his diocese. Alcuin writes plaintively from the court of Charlemagne to his old loved school, "hoping that sacred studies would not be neglected at York, and that all the pains he took in collecting books would not be labour lost." The mournful words in one of the decrees of the synod of Pincahaln, held in A.D. 787, are well styled by a modern writer as "the epitaph" of Northumbria—of her poetry, her literature, and her famous school: all is now weakness, indifference, and darkness. The sad words of the decree in question run as follows: "There were days when we had righteous kings and dukes and bishops, of whose wisdom Northumbria still smells sweetly."

So much for the rapid decay in state and church, which so quickly sapped the prosperity of the world-famed school of York, for a time the most popular school of Christian learning in Europe. So much for the state of matters within the Northumbrian realm: without, a dark cloud was slowly gathering, which was shortly to

* Stopford Brooke, "Early English Literature."

break over all England. The northern sea-pirates were already collecting in vast numbers, and preparing for that awful series of plunder-raids which were to harry the unhappy country of the Engle and Saxon for more than a hundred years. It was a nemesis on these stern and cruel conquering races. The lands they had won at the cost of so much misery and woe from the Briton, they were never to enjoy in peace, in spite of their adoption of Christianity, in spite of their noble and unexampled progress in true learning and in the arts of an advanced civilisation. A dreadful blow was now to fall—indeed, a bolt from the blue, so unlooked-for, so unexpected it was. In 793 some long war-ships manned by Vikings —sea-pirates from those northern seas, which break on the Norway and Danish coasts—suddenly landed on the North-umbrian sea-board. Their bloody and destructive raid extended far and wide. They ravaged the coasts and burned the smiling prosperous Engle villages ; they plundered the monastery of Lindisfarne, rich in the glorious memories of Aidan and Cuthbert ; they burned the holy houses of Wearmouth and Jarrow, with all the priceless treasures collected by the loving care of Benedict Biscop and Bede.

When the news of the slaying of the monks and the awful ruin of these great homes of piety and learning, with their splendid traditions, their noble libraries and curious treasures, reached Northumbrian Alcuin in his home with the emperor Charlemagne in Gaul, he wrote : "He who can hear of this calamity and not cry to God on behalf of his country, has a heart not of flesh but of stone. The most venerable place in Britain, where Christianity first took root among us after Paulinus went away from York, is a prey to heathen men." "This is the beginning of a greater trouble to come," said the famous scholar in a sermon preached by him at this time. Were the words of Alcuin prophecy ?

SAXON DOORWAY, MONK-WEARMOUTH.

CHAPTER XIV.

ENGLISH CHRISTIANITY IN THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH CENTURIES.

The English Church a bond of Union—Summary of the History of the Saxon and Engle Kingdoms—Growing Importance and Power of Wessex—Egbert—His Training under Charlemagne—First King of England—Christian Life among the People—Attractions of the Monastic Life, shown by the Number of Royal Recluses—Influence of the Monasteries on Daily Life—On Art—On Study—Love of Dress in Nunneries—Promotion of Learning—Great Influence of the Church towards National Unity—Change in the Customs and Daily Life of the People—Influence upon Agriculture—Prevalence of Pilgrimage—Endowments of the Church during this Period.

THE history of Wessex and the south of England during the period upon which we have been dwelling, for the Church historian presents but few features of interest outside the influence exercised by the school of Canterbury founded by Theodore and Hadrian, and by their great disciple Aldhelm of Malmesbury. The story of Mercia during the same period contains even less of moment for the student of church history. The episodes of Wilfrid and Chad at Lichfield, their work and influence in the Midlands, have been already dwelt upon ; but both these distinguished men were Northumbrians, and their career was closely bound up with the fortunes of the North Engle kingdom.

For more than a century, ever since the death of the famous organising archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, in 690, until, roughly, the accession of king Egbert in 802, the church for which Theodore and his assistants—men like Hadrian—had devised a wise organisation, and which they had fairly succeeded in welding into unity, exercised a widespread influence over the whole land. The country, it is true, was split up into several states, more or less wrapped up in their own interests, scarcely even recognising that they formed part of one great nation. But amidst the divergence of interests there was one church, which in some respects bound them all together: one primate ; one organisation ; one set of rules and laws ; a common faith ; a common ritual. The church's work and influence in the eventual welding together of England into one nation was without doubt very great, and has rarely been appreciated at its real value. This will be seen if we briefly summarise the history of the chief kingdoms into which the conquered island was divided during the age of the settlement of the conquerors of Britain—a period of about a century and three quarters.

The story of *Northumbria*—the land north of the Humber—the country of the North Engle, including Scotland as far as the Forth, the northern counties, and Yorkshire, has been told with some detail, as it was the principal centre of interest in Britain during the momentous time of the settlement of the conquerors—a period, roughly comprehended, between 605-782—that is to say, from the year of the death of Augustine to the year when archbishop Albert (or Ethelbert)

dedicated the newly built minster church of York just before his death.

The whole of the centre of the island was known as *Mercia*—the country of the Middle Engles—including generally the midland counties south of Yorkshire, the western counties of Cheshire and Shropshire, and the districts watered by the Severn; as well as the eastern counties, the land of the East Engles, which for the greater portion of the time under consideration was included in the supremacy of Mercia. We have seen how, in the middle of the seventh century, under the heathen Penda, Mercia rose for a season to be the chief power in Britain; but its power was eventually broken at the decisive battle of the Winwaed, in 655, when Penda was slain by the Northumbrian king, Oswiu. Again, under Penda's son, Wulfhere, in the year 665, Mercia became for a time the dominant power in the island; but Wulfhere was eventually defeated by the Northumbrians, in 675, and again Mercia lost her temporary supremacy. Once more, after many years, in the year 718, a man of rare power, Ethelbald, a son of Alweo, a brother of the great heathen Penda, was raised to the throne of the Midlands, and under him Mercia became again for a time the leading state in England. For more than twenty years

MALMESBURY ABBEY. *Photo: William Hank, Malmesbury.*

its king was recognised as the overlord at least in the middle and southern parts of the island; but in 754 the West Saxons defeated him at a great battle at Burford; and from that day we hear no more of any enduring supremacy of Mercia. For a time, it is true, under Offa—a kinsman of Ethelbald, and who succeeded

OFFA'S DOMINIONS.

him on the throne of Mercia—the Midland Engles were powerful. Offa was a great statesman, and recognising the growing weight and vast influence of the church, in 787, with the consent of the Roman see, he raised the see of Lichfield into an archbishopric; but this was no lasting arrangement, and we soon find Lichfield a simple bishopric again. In 828 Mercia passed finally under the supremacy of Wessex.

During all this period no very distinguished Mercian appears in the ranks of the great makers of the Church of England. Wilfrid, in his exile, twice at least resided for a lengthened time in the Midlands, and for some years occupied the position of bishop of Lichfield, the chief Mercian see. Chad also lived and worked under the protection of the Mercian sovereign of the day, as bishop of Lichfield and chief pastor of Mercia. But Wilfrid and Chad were Northumbrians, and their presence in Mercia may be almost termed accidental. During even the Mercian portion of their lives, they were ever closely connected with Northumbria. Under these eminent missionary bishops and others of less general notoriety, Mercia gradually became Christian. But Mercia occupied no place like Northumbria as an influential home of missionary enterprise. Again, as a *literary* centre we hear nothing of the Midland kingdom — no school whence issued distinguished scholars and writers, like Aldhelm and Bede and Cædmon, who, with their pupils, so powerfully influenced the conquerors in their movement in the direction of Christianity. Among the early scholars and writers of the Church of England we find no distinguished Mercian names. The schools of Canterbury and Malmesbury, of Whitby, of Jarrow, and of York, whence issued the great Christian teachers of the England of the North-folk, lay outside the Mercian realm.

The third of the leading kingdoms of these Northmen conquerors—Wessex—possesses a very different record. Wessex —the land of the West Saxons—included what may be termed the fairest and richest portions of England. Generally speaking, it was supreme after the year 634

in Kent, Surrey, Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Sussex, Wilts, Hampshire, Gloucestershire; and gradually it spread westward over Dorset and Somerset and even further west, over lands inhabited by the remnant of the old British inhabitants of the island. But for a considerable period the strength of Wessex was broken, and her influence in Britain was hopelessly maimed, by the long and bloody struggle for the throne between the royal lines of the two brothers—Ceawlin and Cutha, who lived in the last quarter of the sixth century—the descendants of the original West Saxon conqueror, Cerdic. It was not until after 625 that Wessex really emerged from the throes of this fatal contest of the rival royal houses.

Ceadwalla, a prince of Ceawlin's royal line, after crushing the rival princes of the West Saxons, ascended the throne, gathering all the West Saxon peoples beneath his sceptre, and thus in 685 established a powerful supremacy of West Saxons throughout the whole of the south of England. But it was really under Ceadwalla's successor, Ina, that Wessex may be said for the first time to have become an important power in the island. The seventh century was drawing to its close, when the West Saxons assumed the position among the conquering peoples of England to which their great numbers and the unrivalled position of their territory would seem fairly to have entitled them. Ina's reign (A.D. 688 to 726) over Wessex, although ceaselessly filled up with wars—both domestic and foreign, at home and also with the Mercians, his ambitious neighbours—consolidated the West Saxon power. He was the acknowledged over-lord of that large and important division of England which lay between the sea-coast of Essex, and the west country which looks to Exeter as its capital. Winchester, London, Bath, and Exeter were among his cities. It was in his days and under his strong protection that Aldhelm, whose life and influence we have already sketched, lived and worked.

Ina seems to have been something more than a valiant and skilful commander, for he welded his widely-extended dominions into one solid realm; and the code of laws which bears his name, and which still remains to us, shows us that he was a wise and far-seeing king in the true sense of the word. Strangely enough, like his predecessor king Ceadwalla, he too grew weary of the ceaseless anxieties and restless cares of such a royalty, and laying down crown and sceptre, sought peace as a quiet pilgrim to Rome, where he died in 726.

After his abdication, once more Wessex was distracted with its own internal dissensions; and for a time its powerful neighbours, Mercia and Mid-Britain, were the dominant power in England south of Yorkshire. But after the pitched battle of Burford between Mercia and Wessex in the year 754, in which Mercia was utterly routed, the West Saxons recovered their supremacy, and Mercia at once sank into a subordinate place. During the years which followed the West Saxon victory over Mercia at Burford, Wessex gradually pushed forward its frontier over the beautiful and fertile lands westward of Exeter, still dwelt in by the old dispossessed British people; and in 786 we find the West Saxon ruling in the west as far

as the banks of the Tamar, though the power and influence of this West Saxon people was sadly maimed after Ina's abdication, by the renewal of those internal dissensions which had been their bane for nearly two hundred years. The coveted succession to the crown of Wessex was disputed by two lineal descendants of Ceawlin, the old West Saxon conqueror—the princes Beorhtric and Egbert. The former got the upper hand, and Egbert became a fugitive, and took refuge, first with king Offa in Mercia, and later, when king Offa sided with his rival Beorhtric, at the splendid court of the mighty emperor Charlemagne on the Continent. This was in A.D. 787.

Egbert spent some fifteen years abroad, and a silence broods over this long period of the exile of the West Saxon prince; but it was, no doubt, in the company of the great emperor and his ministers that Egbert laid the foundations of his future greatness. Such a court as that of Charlemagne—the master of all the Teutonic peoples, lord of an empire stretching from the North Sea shores to the Mediterranean in the far south—had never been seen since the days of the greatest of the Roman emperors. From the lips of the great emperor himself, from men like Alcuin, Charlemagne's friend and adviser, Egbert the exile learned the deep wisdom and the profound statecraft which in after-days enabled him to become the over-lord and, in a measure, the first king of a united England; for in his day Mercia and Northumbria both acknowledged the supremacy of Wessex.

His long period of exile came to an end in 802, for on the death of his rival, king Beorhtric, Egbert was called to the throne of Wessex. Our work dealing with the Church of England rather than with the state, it would be beyond our plan to enter into any detail of Egbert's great reign. During his long rule, which extended over thirty-seven years, Wessex obtained supremacy over the last fragment of British dominion in the west, and Cornwall acknowledged the over-lordship of the West Saxon. This was in the year 815. But the arms of Egbert and the West Saxons were not only victorious over the poor remnant of the conquered British people in the extreme west; in 828 the whole of Mid-England, the realm of Engle Mercia, for the first time acknowledged a foreign over-lord in the person of the West Saxon Egbert; and even this great submission of the Midlands failed to satisfy the far-reaching ambition of the Wessex sovereign. The same year which witnessed the acquiescence of Mercia in the supremacy of Wessex, saw the invasion of Northumbria by the armies of the successful conqueror.

We have already briefly traced the decline of the Northumbrian kingdom. Years of ceaseless internal troubles, anarchy, and misrule; a dim terror of what the future might hold in store for them if the dreaded sea pirates of the north, already harrying their coasts and burning their most cherished sanctuaries, should follow up their first successful raids—all this seems to have quenched the old Engle spirit of the days of Edwin and Oswiu; and at the first summons of the conquering West Saxon monarch, without a battle or a struggle, the Northumbrian thanes met Egbert on their frontier in Derbyshire, and

CORONATION OF CHARLEMAGNE AT ROME.

(From the Picture by Prof. W. Kaulbach in the National Gallery, Berlin.)

quietly accepted him as their over-lord. What we should call the national struggle for "Home Rule" in the northern and midland counties by the children of the North and Mid-Engles was by no means ended; but the struggle, though often renewed, never broke up the chain of union between the Engle and Saxon peoples which Egbert had forged, first in Mercia, and then at Dore on the Northumbrian border. The later legend, which styles Egbert the West Saxon, king of England, perhaps anticipates; but, as our historian reminds us, from that eventful year of grace, 827, "one great England was made in fact, if not as yet in name."

In this necessarily brief sketch of the history of the three great kingdoms into which the England of the Anglo-Saxon conquerors was divided in the seventh and eighth centuries—Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex—no mention has been made of the little East Saxon kingdom, and of the yet more important divisions of Kent and East Anglia. At a comparatively speaking early date the East Saxons ceased to have a separate existence; their territory was quickly merged in the dominion of their powerful neighbours and kinsmen in Wessex.

Kent has a more distinct history. Its importance naturally was chiefly derived from the position of Canterbury within its borders, Canterbury being the seat of the primate, and the home of a famous school of learning; the seat of the archbishop of a church yearly growing in importance and in far-reaching influence. But Kent for a very long period could hardly claim even the shadow of independence; Wessex ever overshadowed it, and the sovereign of Wessex was, with perhaps brief intervals, its acknowledged over-lord.

East Anglia, the home and realm of the once mighty Redwald, the solitary East Anglian king who exercised any real supremacy beyond his own borders, remains alone to be spoken of. This important division of the island, extending roughly from the shores of the Wash to the frontiers of the East Saxon territory in the south, Essex, and from the long sea-board on the North Sea to the undetermined boundaries of midland Mercia, loved again and again to assert its independence of the powerful kinsfolk who dwelt westward and northward, the Middle and Northern Engles. But though it claimed, it seems rarely to have enjoyed the independent position it longed for; and to one or other of the Northumbrian or Mercian monarchs it had, with brief intervals of a semi-independence, ever to submit as over-lord. And when Mercia eventually bowed beneath the supremacy of Egbert and the West Saxons, East Anglia, of course, passed with Mercia without a struggle under the same domination, and became a province of the united Anglo-Saxon realm. By a strange fate, however, the great *Engle* race—northern, middle, and eastern—while consenting to pass under the *Saxon* supremacy of Wessex, gave their name to the great nation thus made up—*Engle*-land or *England*.

We have been dwelling on the life and influence of a few great ones, round whom all general church history in the seventh and eighth centuries clusters. Of these prominent figures we are able to draw fairly accurate pictures: we know much

of their views, their hopes and outlooks, their misgivings and fears, their successes and their failures. We possess memoirs and chronicles, some of them written by men who had seen and conversed familiarly as friend with friend with the subject of their memoir or biography. From these writings we gather many details concerning the private life of these leaders of men—of these founders and builders of our Church of England. These are pictures of the life—public and private—of earnest and impassioned missionaries like Cuthbert and Chad; of great statesmen-bishops and church organisers like Wilfrid and Theodore; of great and world-famous scholars like Hadrian, Aldhelm of Malmesbury, and the saintly Bede of Jarrow; of women whose vast influence was second to none of these famous men, such as Hilda of Whitby, and Etheldreda—somewhile queen—the greatly loved abbess and foundress of Ely in the Fen country.

But what of the Christian life among the people in these two centuries? We have few details here. We know in these early times but little of this life outside the monasteries, or of any teaching other than that given by monk-priests, who from their monastic houses as centres went out to different rural stations to baptize, to preach, and celebrate all the ceremonies of worship, and to which, when their work was temporarily done, they returned as their permanent homes. English Christianity at first, certainly for these two centuries of which we are speaking, was specially monastic. Rural and town parishes were formed but slowly under the influence of archbishop Theodore of Canterbury in the south, and archbishop Egbert of York in the north. The decrees of the Council of Cloveshoe, in 747, are the earliest authentic documents which speak of the distribution of laylands under the government of bishops, in distinction from churches situated in lands belonging to monasteries, and under the control of their abbots. At the close of the next century (the ninth), in spite of the havoc and confusion which resulted from the cruel Danish harryings, we find at length unmistakable traces of the growth of a parochial organisation in the English church. For instance, we find on the confines of Mercia, in the diocese of Worcester, an estate at Woodchester, not far from Gloucester, with "a citizen's priest" resident upon it, occupying a position well defined and secure. But during the seventh and eighth centuries, the monasteries supplied in England the place of parish churches; and it is to the great monastic communities that we must look when we seek for the real centres of Christianity.

These religious houses in those early days must have not only possessed a vast influence, and exercised a far-reaching power, but they must have been centres of real and very earnest religious life, to have attracted within their walls so many royal and noble persons willing to give up their earthly rank and power and possessions, and to throw in their lot for ever with the nameless brethren of a monastic community.

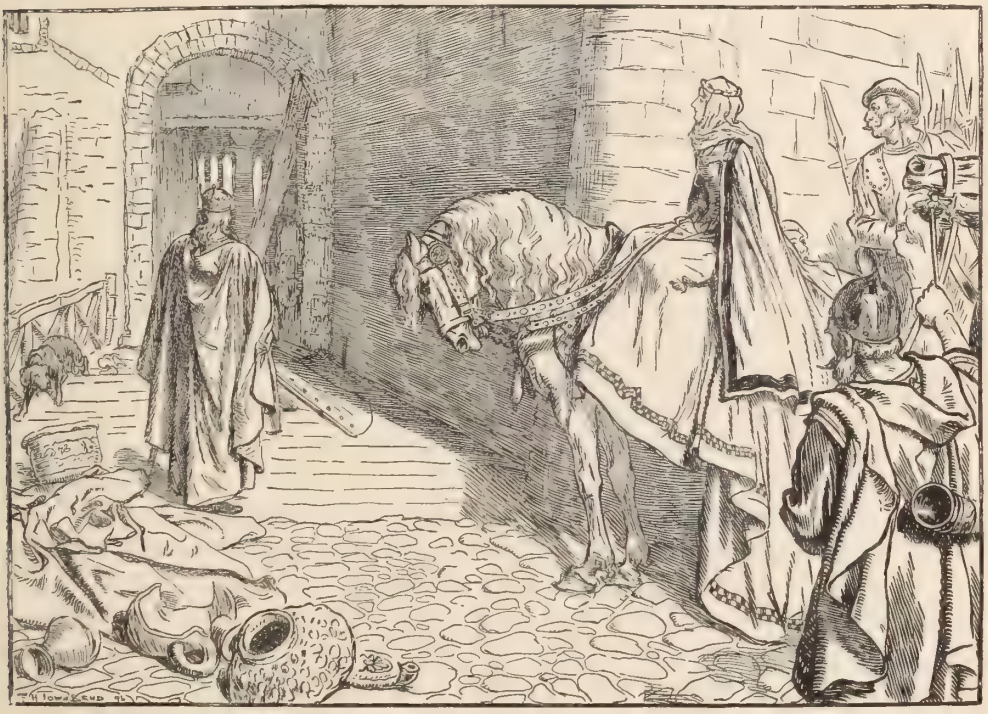
Kings and princes from all, or well-nigh all, the ruling houses of the Engle, Saxon, and Jutish conquerors of Britain, in their turn assumed the cowl of a monk. Comparatively early in the story of English Christianity we have mentioned Sigebert,

king of East Anglia, who retired to a cloister, but was afterwards persuaded by the urgent entreaties of his subjects to leave his peaceful retreat and to lead them against that determined foe of Christianity, Penda of Mercia, falling in the battle and rout of his subjects. Sebbi, king of the little kingdom of the East Saxons—Essex and Middlesex—died a monk in 695, and the vast stone coffin of this cowled sovereign was looked upon for a thousand years by the citizens of London as it lay in St. Paul's, until it was destroyed by the Great Fire in the days of Charles II. Another king of Essex, Offa, accompanied by Coenred, sovereign of Mercia, laid aside the insignia of his high office early in the eighth century, and the monk-kings, proceeding as pilgrims to Rome, died there as simple monks. In Mercia the predecessor of this Coenred, Ethelred, Penda's son, a few years before had exchanged his crown for a cowl, and for ten years ruled the monastery of Bardeney. This Ethelred we have already spoken of as bishop Wilfrid's devoted friend, who received the great exile and showed him such warm friendship after Wilfrid returned from Rome. In Wessex the first Christian king, Centwin, in the year 685, after a war-filled reign, retired into one of the monasteries he had been instrumental in founding. Ceadwalla, his successor, also abdicated, and died in Rome, whither he had gone as a pilgrim, in 689.*

Of his successor Ina, the friend of Aldhelm of Malmesbury — whose long reign of thirty-seven years is remembered principally from his famous code of laws, "The Dooms of Ina"—a curious tale is told of the immediate cause of his becoming a cowled monk. His queen had long been desirous to lay down her royal state, and wished to induce king Ina, her husband, to consent to this, and to give up the world with her. A great banquet had been given in one of the royal country palaces. On the morning after the festival the king and queen rode forth on their journey to another of their residences. It was the custom for the courts of these early Saxon kings constantly to travel from one estate to another, and thus to consume on the spot the varied produce of the royal demesnes. After riding for an hour or two, the queen asked Ina to return; on reaching the royal house they had recently quitted, he was dismayed to find it deserted and desecrated—the very bed on which he had slept the night before was occupied by a sow with her litter. The queen Ethelburga—who had arranged this strange sight—with great fervour then dilated on the awful change which had passed over the scene of the feast of yesterday. "Where," she asked, "were all the courtiers, the splendid silver dishes, the delicate meats, the purple hangings of the rooms? See," said the eloquent queen, "all has vanished like smoke; and those who love these perishing things shall in like manner pass away. Shall not we, who fare more delicately than other men, shall we not," pointing to the repulsive sight of the sow and her litter, "fall into still more miserable corruption than other men?" It is a strange legend, but it shows how deeply the thought of judgment to come had entered into the hearts of the Woden-descended kings and princes of the Saxon and Engle races.

* *Cf.* Montalembert's "Monks of the West."

Ina, we know, abdicated, as did so many of these crowned chieftains, and went, with his queen, Ethelburga, on a pilgrimage to Rome, where he died in the obscurity he sought. Ethelburga became subsequently a nun in England. abbesses in Northumbria—have already come before us. In Kent, early in the seventh century, Ethelburga, widow of king Edwin of Northumbria, the daughter of Ethelbert, the Jutish king, founded the nunnery of Lyminge, near Folkestone.



SCENE UPON INA'S RETURN (*p.* 288).

Nor was this strange passion for making their homes in the great monasteries confined to kings and princes and thanes; a similar attraction drew a still greater number of the queens and princesses and noble ladies among the Engle and Saxon peoples to these new homes of prayer and study. A great number of names of cloistered women drawn from such ranks in those times are preserved to us. The stories of Hilda, Ebba, Elfleda—royal Her tomb is still shown in that most ancient church. Her niece Eanswitha founded the first house of God at Folkestone, and her name is still revered in the well-known Folkestone church dedicated to the Jutish princess. This Eanswitha's nunnery became not only a home of learning, but a school of agriculture. She died in 640. Minster, in the Isle of Thanet, owes its foundation to another once famous cloistered lady of the same royal

house, Domneva, whose daughter again succeeded her as abbess of the same house of Minster, and won among the people an enduring popularity and admiration under the once well-known and venerated name of Mildred. This royal house gave several others of its daughters as nuns to the church.

In Mercia and the Midlands, strangely enough, the family of the last notorious heathen king, Penda, the hero of so many desperate fights against his Christian countrymen, furnishes, perhaps, more instances than any of the other royal houses of the conquerors, of ardent and devoted women who gave up all for the sake of that cloister life which so quickly and firmly had taken hold of the minds and hearts of the North-folk settlers in Britain. From the year 635 to 654 king Anna reigned over that important division of the Engle race settled in East Anglia, the Eastern counties; king Anna was one of the many victims of the wars of Penda. He fell in a battle with the heathen Mercian sovereign, in 654. Three daughters and a son were born to him. This son also had three daughters, who all became nuns; two were in succession abbesses of Hackness in Yorkshire, a house founded by Hilda of Whitby, and the third was abbess of Repton. The three daughters of king Anna, who also took the veil, occupied a distinguished position in the monastic church of the seventh century. All the three were reckoned among the early saints of the Church. The youngest, Withburga, founded a small religious house at Dereham, in Norfolk, and attained among the people of the county a great influence and possessed an extraordinary reputation for sanctity. Etheldreda, the eldest of the three sisters, became, it will be remembered, the queen of Egfrid of Northumbria, whom she—following, as it is to be feared, the advice of bishop Wilfrid—left to become a nun. This Etheldreda, after many strange adventures, founded the celebrated monastery of Ely, and subsequently ranked as one of the most popular and revered saints of the Anglo-Saxon church. Her sister Sexburga, queen and subsequently regent of Kent, succeeded her as abbess of the great East Anglian monastery, which she ruled for twenty years, dying in 699. Her daughter Ermenilda married a king of Mercia, one of Penda's sons. This Ermenilda in turn became abbess of Ely; her daughter, after a long life as a nun, ended her days as abbess after her mother of the same famous house.

This somewhat dry list of leading personages of both sexes who adopted the monastic life in the seventh and eighth centuries, will give some idea of the extraordinary fascination which "the religious life" possessed, in the early years of the adoption of Christianity, for the conquerors of Britain. The instances in each case have been chosen out of the reigning families of Kent, Northumbria, Wessex, Mercia, East Anglia, and Essex, and include in their number not a few sovereign princes and queens.

What, now, was the influence of these monasteries and nunneries, scattered in such numbers all over the conquered island, upon the every-day life of the people generally? For it must be remembered that these monasteries were the centres whence came all, or well-nigh all

the authoritative religious teaching at work in the seventh and eighth centuries: in this period there was scarcely any parochial organisation apart from the monasteries.

First and chiefest must be ranked the quiet moral influence which these great communities exercised, by the example of their own lives of self-denial, prayer, and study; by their schools for the young; by their constant preaching and exhortation. The monasteries of that early age were no mere communities of ascetics occupied in working out their own salvation, separated from the people round them; they were from the first, diligent missionaries, perpetually going in and out of the homes of the people, holding services in the remotest spots—praying, teaching, preaching everywhere. The monasteries were their homes, their head-quarters, whither they returned periodically from their preaching and teaching circuits; their homes for refreshment, study, and prayer, whence, after a season of rest and, apparently, of study, they would sally forth and recommence afresh their public ministrations. This was the life evidently led by these great fathers of the faith. Aidan so used Lindisfarne as his centre of work; Cuthbert made old Melrose his centre before he went to Lindisfarne, which subsequently became his monastic home.

We have a letter written to St. Boniface, then at work on the Continent, written in the middle of the eighth century by an English abbot, a friend of Aldhelm, and trained in the school of Malmesbury, which sets before us clearly the aims of these early monastic teachers. "To overcome the obstinacy of the heathen, to fertilise the stony and barren soil of their hearts, pains must be taken not to insult or irritate them, but all care must be adopted to set before them our doctrines with unfailing moderation and gentleness, so as to make them blush at their foolish superstitions without exasperating them."

Nor was the power exercised by the monasteries only a moral influence. Thanks to the high favour in which these Christian communities were held by the early Engle and Saxon princes, not a few of whom were devoted adherents of the new faith, the bishops and abbots of the more important religious houses, and even abbesses, had a seat in the great national councils; and through their persuasions severe penalties were decreed against apostates, drunkards, transgressors against morality, violators of the Sunday rest, and the like; while a new feeling of care for the poor, the slave, and the oppressed, unknown previously, became general. The duty of soothing suffering and remedying wrong and injustice was recognised in a way undreamed of hitherto, as through the work of the monasteries Christian influences permeated the nation.

Let us glance for a brief space into the *interior* of one or two of these ancient prayer-homes, which exercised so powerful an influence upon the English peoples. We shall at once mark the strange contrast between the life lived in these communities, and the aims and ends pursued in them, and the life lived by the immediate ancestors of these monks and nuns—the rude, heathen conquerors of Britain; whose highest ideal was bravery in their robber warfare; whose ideas of art were founded almost entirely in the adornment of their

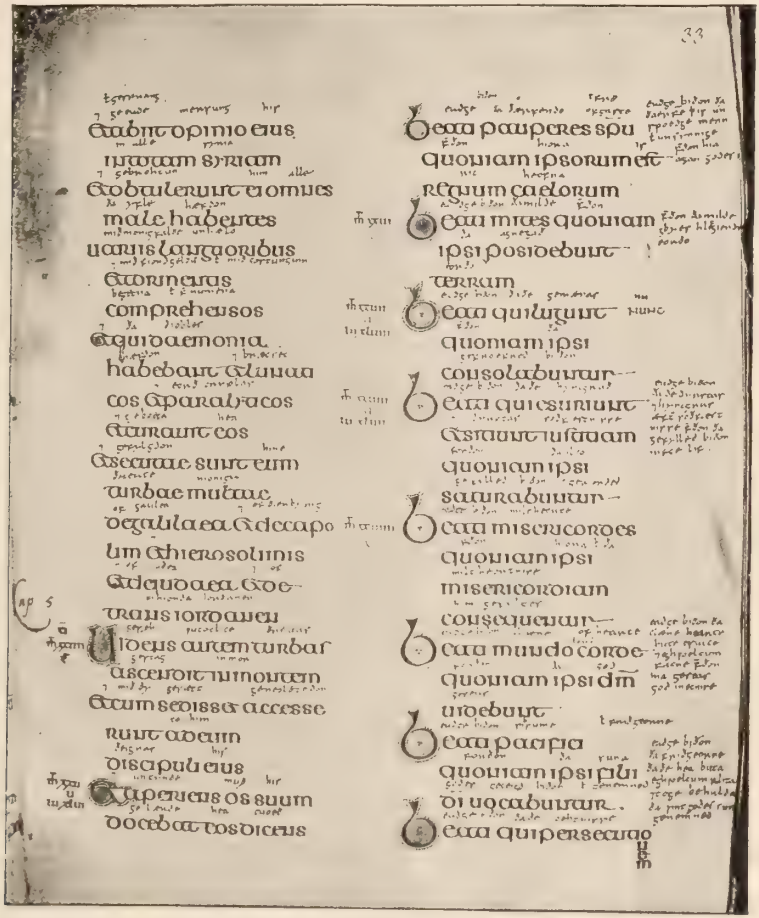
weapons of attack and defence, and perhaps of their warships ; whose hopes of a future life, as far as they suffered the unseen to influence them here, were strictly limited to a reproduction of the scenes of fighting and carousing in the midst of which they lived, and in which they delighted. It seems almost incredible that the immediate descendants of such a wild, rude, warlike race could in so brief a time adapt themselves to so changed a life, to so different an ideal, to such new hopes. The mainspring, however, of that changed life must never be lost sight of. It was the love for that Redeemer, of whose work among men these hitherto untutored North-folk had never heard, which alone effected the swift and mighty change.

The large majority of the Engle and Saxon monasteries were governed by the rule of St. Benedict, which, as we have seen, very soon superseded the stricter and more austere rule of the Irish Columban and the teachers of the Celtic school of monasticism, in England as on the continent of Europe. This rule of St. Benedict, though less austere than the Celtic monastic practice, was very precise in insisting upon study. It required of every monk four hours daily for reading—that is, for study of some kind. In many of the more important houses, schools existed for the training of children entrusted to the charge of the monks of the community. These at a comparatively very early period became veritable centres of intellectual life. Really great libraries were in many instances collected for the use of the inmates ; and what we have seen in our picture of Bede's life at Jarrow was repeated on a similar, though perhaps on a smaller scale, in many another English monastery. The school of Bede and the library of Benedict Biscop, in the two well-known houses of Wearmouth and Jarrow, were only striking instances of what was being done in numerous other communities which flourished in the seventh and eighth centuries. St. Jerome's precept was precious among the monasteries : "Have a book always in your hand or under your eyes." And Bede's words were true of many an unknown scholar-monk when he said, "It had always been delightful to him either to learn, to teach, or to write."

Though Latin seems to have been the language which both monks and nuns of the days of Aldhelm and Bede aimed at possessing, and using in their services, in their correspondence, and in their writings, yet Latin in the Saxon and Engle houses was evidently an exotic. Special provision was made—we have seen it already in Bede's letter to archbishop Egbert : it was the subject also of special directions issued in church councils of that age—that the *vernacular* English should be used in their public ministrations, or at least that explanations should be given of any Latin ritual ; the epistle and gospel of the day, for instance, were always to be expounded to the people in English. Translations into English of the Old and the New Testaments were circulated freely. Aldhelm and Bede early in the eighth century are said to have completely translated—the one the Psalter, the other the Old and New Testament.

It may seem on first thoughts a curious remark to allude to "art" in speaking of these early English monasteries ; but in

truth "art," using the word in its full signification, was by no means unknown in these almost forgotten homes of prayer and study, which had so much to do with



THE BEATITUDES, FROM THE LINDISFARNE GOSPEL-BOOK (*British Museum*).

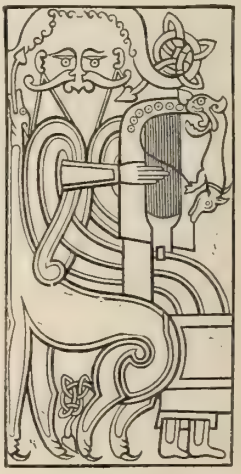
building up our Church of England. Benedict Biscop was, as we have already seen, the great encourager of art in the latter part of the seventh century; and he and bishop Wilfrid introduced a really noble ecclesiastical *architecture* among the monasteries in the north of Britain. Wilfrid's stately architectural works at Hexham and Ripon, completed before the end of the seventh century, have been already alluded to; as also the work of Biscop in adorning the walls of his buildings with paintings of Scriptural subjects.

Another kind of "art" was practised in these Engle and Saxon prayer-homes, in which the monks attained a very high proficiency—viz., the copying and adorning

ORGANISTRUM OF THE 9TH CENTURY.

of manuscripts, and the binding of the more precious of these volumes with rich and costly bindings. The magnificent Book of the Gospels which bishop Wilfrid before the last quarter of the seventh century laid upon the altar of his Ripon monastic church, on the morning of its solemn consecration, was written in letters of gold upon purple vellum, and its binding was covered with plates of gold encrusted with precious gems. The Lindisfarne or Durham Gospel-book, now in the British Museum, was written in the holy house of Lindisfarne "for God and St. Cuthbert" by Eadfrith, bishop of that see, in 698–721, and was adorned with paintings by Ethelwald, a monk of the house under the same Eadfrith. These paintings, still before us, consist of elaborate designs in spiral and interlaced work, and figures of the Evangelists. They are specially interesting as showing the beginnings of a native English monastic School of Art, and are marked with a freedom and a boldness of treatment which give that school a distinct character of its own. A beautiful effect is given to the interlaced patterns by an exquisite use of colours.

Besides the practice of architecture and painting, and the beautiful work in gold and colour in the manuscript books of these early monasteries, another kind of art was sedulously cultivated in the Engle and Saxon monasteries of the same period. The many services which the rules of St. Benedict demanded from the monks of the order, suggested, no doubt, that strict attention should be paid to the careful and stately rendering of these repeated acts of divine worship, not only with a view of offering a perfect service to the Heavenly King, but also with the purpose of lessening the monotony of these oft-repeated services—a monotony which would necessarily mar their earnestness and reality. No less than seven of these services daily were enjoined upon the Benedictine monks. Among the many useful educational works of Hadrian and archbishop Theodore in Canterbury (Theodore died in 690) was the foundation of a great school of music and song. This musical training was rapidly taken up in most of the monasteries of England. Bishop Wilfrid, with the aid of his devoted friend and biographer, Eddius, who was an eminent musician, introduced this musical instruction through all the churches of the north of England. Thanks to Wilfrid's untiring energy, the vast diocese of Northumbria became rapidly a great centre of music, rivalling even the school of Hadrian at Canterbury; perhaps none of the many noble



KING DAVID PLAYING UPON THE HARP.
(From an Irish Miniature of the 8th Century.)

efforts of this celebrated prelate were crowned with more conspicuous success than his work and pains in the field of church music and singing. Wearmouth, the sister house of Bede's Jarrow, became at a very early date the central school of sacred song in the north.

In the story of church music, the English appear, says the French writer Montalembert, to have been, among the monks of the order of St. Benedict, "those who love music most passionately." We possess a curious illustration of this passion in a letter written by an abbot of Jarrow, a disciple and successor of Bede, to Lullius, archbishop of Mainz, on the Rhine, which runs as follows: "I am most anxious to have a harpist who can play upon the harp we call a 'Rotta.' I have the instrument, but have not the artist. Send me one, and I pray you, do not laugh at my request." So great was this love for music among the Engle and Saxon monks, that it seems very early to have even led to abuses, for the Council of Cloveshoe, in 747, ordered the expulsion from monasteries of harpists, musicians, etc.

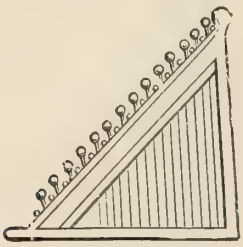
ROTTA.

In the nunneries, in the last half of the seventh and in the eighth centuries, a similar attention was paid to the copying and adorning of manuscripts, as in the monasteries for monks only. The art of embroidery was also especially cultivated in these communities, and their beautiful work in gold and silver stuffs, sometimes enriched with jewels, quickly became famous even on the Continent. The English schools of cunning needlework of various descriptions endured for centuries, and the term "English work" was long given to these exquisite specimens of patient and enduring industry. The many female communities to which we have been alluding, which grew up with such astonishing rapidity in every part of the conquered island, were veritable hives of labour—really homes where art and literature were cultivated.

Streoneshalch, on the hill of Whitby, under its royal abbess, Hilda, we have already spoken of as the cradle of English poetry. It was there Cædmon lived and was trained, there where his undying songs were written as early as 670–680; and to the watchful care of Hilda and her sisters of Whitby that early school of vernacular poetry owes at once its genesis and subsequent noble development.

Early in the eighth century Latin was a familiar study, certainly in the greater nunneries. All the nuns, or almost all, were well acquainted with the classical tongue; some of them were even Greek scholars. Convent corresponded with convent in that language. In the same tongue, too, are written the letters preserved to us from Aldhelm in England to the nuns of Barking, Sherborne, and other houses; the correspondence of St. Boniface in the same century (the eighth) from the Continent with the abbess Brigga and other sisters, whose strange old-world names

only live in these interesting and curious communications between a great and revered master and his pupils—names such



TRIANGULAR SAXON HARP OF THE 9TH CENTURY.

as Leobgitha, Cynegilda, Eadburga, Eangytha, Lioba, Egburga, Wethburga, Anstrude, Ansilda, and others; musical and attractive names, no doubt, in their day, but rude and harsh sounding to us.

On this notable effort of these sisters of the early Anglo-Saxon religious houses to make themselves familiar with Latin —for it must have been in those days a really great effort, and represented in many cases years of patient study on the part of these daughters of rude Engle and Saxon fathers—Montalembert makes the following interesting and suggestive comment, which well deserves to be quoted and remembered by students interested in these Benedictine sisters, who played so conspicuous a part in building up the church of Christ in our island. "It is to be regretted," he says, "that these candid and impassioned souls had recourse to *Latin* to express their emotions and confidences; if they had employed their native (English) idiom instead of a language which, though not dead (since it is the language of spiritual life), must have cost them many efforts ere they became familiar with it, we should, no doubt, have seen their thoughts flow forth more freely, ... bearing the characteristic mark of a powerful and impassioned originality like the verses of Cædmon or the poems of Beowulf. Even under the artificial constraint imposed upon them by the use of Latin, the reader feels the swelling life and force of an original, sincere, and vehement nature."

The female religious houses, following the example of the monasteries, contained schools in which were trained not only the future novices — girls who intended devoting their lives to "religion"—but also numbers of young girls besides, who were trained for the life of the world.

In the eighth century a curious weakness seems to have invaded these female monasteries, and in the eyes of the religious teachers of that day to have somewhat marred their beautiful and most useful life. The undoubted skill of these English nuns in needlework and cunning embroidery —often of a very costly description—

SQUARE PSALTERY OF THE 9TH CENTURY.

has been noticed; very early this skill in the production of exquisite and showy work became, in the eyes of great masters

and austere teachers such as Aldhelm and Bede, and the great Boniface—who worked on the continent of Europe—a real danger to the spiritual life of many of these sisters in the English nunneries. The nuns desired themselves to dress in

PORTION OF PSALM CXLIX., AND AN ILLUSTRATION OF PSALM CL. 3, 4.
(From the "Utrecht Psalter," 5th or 6th Century.)

the beautiful fabrics, the creations of their hands, and busy, inventive brains. Bede found nothing more serious than this strange passion to note in the transgressions of the monastery of Coldingham. Boniface, when archbishop of Mainz, in the Rhineland, mentioned this love of dress among the "religious" as one of the greatest dangers of monastic life. Aldhelm of Malmesbury writes with anger and sorrow respecting the luxury displayed by the clergy of both sexes in their vestments; but dwells especially on the dress affected by abbesses and nuns, who wore scarlet and violet tunics, hoods and cuffs trimmed with furs and silk; who curled their hair with a hot iron round their foreheads, and who changed their veil into an ornament, arranging it in such a way as to make it fall to their feet. The Council of Cloveshoe, in 747, alludes, though in less glowing language, to this same love of dress, which evidently had taken strong hold in very early days of many dwellers in the Engle and Saxon

nunneries, and, in the opinion of the principal ascetic teachers of the day, seriously threatened the inner life of these houses by diverting the spiritual aspirations of the professed sisters dwelling in them. To us with our fuller knowledge, there is something infinitely pathetic in this breaking out of such a strong female instinct among these poor women, now held by irrevocable vows, some of them perhaps against their will; and, in any case, telling a tale of terrible reaction against the monotonous life enforced by such vows, when the original enthusiasm had begun to wear away.

In relating the story of the seventh and eighth centuries, and reviewing the work which the Church of Christ accomplished in England during those two hundred years, it would seem that the historian was writing romance rather than sober history, so marvellous was the change worked through its agency among the half-savage pagan North-folk who had taken forcible possession of the island. For the settlement of the conquerors was carried out, strange to say, under the influence of the religion of the conquered and dispossessed people. It was Christianity which had the chief part in moulding the new England of the Northmen.

The rapidity with which Christianity struck firm root among the northern conquerors of Britain; the singular vitality of the Church of England in these two centuries, the seventh and eighth; its devoted piety; the splendid generosity it evoked on the part of the kings and chieftains; its noble and matchless spirit of foreign missionary enterprise; its deep and profound learning; its poetry; its love for art—have been dwelt upon with surprise and admiration by most of the writers on this period. "Scarcely was Christianity presented to the Anglo-Saxons when they embraced it with singular fidelity and singleness of heart. . . . In a single century England became known to Christendom as a fountain of light."* The Frenchman, Montalembert, the Romist writer, is as enthusiastic here as our own Anglican scholars.

The fascination which Christianity from the first exercised over the hearts of the invaders, we have considered to be largely owing to the manner in which the great Christian truths were first presented to these rude and untutored pagan warriors and their wives and daughters. We have seen how comparatively little impression was made upon the East Engles by the companions of Augustine; how royal favour and patronage failed to establish the Roman teachers in the homes of the pagan settlers in London and Essex; how Paulinus, with all his learning and zeal, was utterly unable to find the key to the Northumbrian hearts. And yet these true men told the self-same story which soon afterwards was received with enthusiasm when told by a different school of missionaries, among the very peoples who expelled Mellitus, and persecuted Lawrence, and rudely drove out Paulinus from the scenes of his self-denying labours. The great work for which the seventh century will for ever be a conspicuous century in English—even in European—history, was the changing an uncivilised pagan race of conquerors into

* Bishop Stubbs.

a Christian people, among whom learning and art with extraordinary rapidity found a home; among whom a love of literature became so firmly rooted, that its schools early in the following century were resorted to even by pupils drawn from all parts of the continent of Europe. The great Celtic missionaries of the seventh century completely changed the character of the Northern conquerors, and prepared the ground for the monastic life and the literary work of the next age. Nor was the missionary work of this extraordinary school of devoted preachers by any means confined to England; a long and illustrious line of Celtic evangelists issuing from England powerfully influenced enormous tracts of country on the continent of Europe. In the history of Christianity, among the records of men who have relit the torch of a dying religion in countries where faith seemed waning, or who have for the first time successfully preached the story of the Cross to pagan peoples, no names are more famous than those of the great English missionary teachers trained in the Celtic school—names such as Willibrord, Adalbert, Ledger, and Boniface, not to speak of a somewhat earlier generation, when men of the same school worked and taught under the yet greater names of Columban and Gall.

The decisions of the Synod of Whitby in 664, however, paved the way for the gradual extinction of the Celtic school of religious thought before the century closed. In the person of Wilfrid the instrument which brought about the new order of things was found. We have already traced his history. He has been not untruly termed the first of English Churchmen. No man, perhaps, has ever been the object of greater love and devotion; no one, on the other hand, perhaps, has ever been more intensely hated. But he did his work well; and the fruit of his laborious life was the Church which with many changes, though with an unbroken continuity, still endures, still guides the thoughts and aspirations of the world-wide Anglo-Saxon race. Side by side with him we catch sight of a group of other figures of distinguished men, a group generally and on the whole unfriendly to Wilfrid personally. But their very opposition and enmity really assisted the cause which he had so deeply at heart; for they were enabled to correct some of the faults and errors—not a few in number—which marred the work of the famous champion of the ritual and practices and discipline adopted on the continent of Europe, and generally known as Roman.

We pass to the next century—the eighth. Theodore died in 690; Wilfrid and Aldhelm passed away in the year 709; and a new race of distinguished men were raised up to occupy the stage in this eighth century. The new England of the North-folk was now Christian—in many districts devotedly Christian—thanks to the successful labours of the great Celtic missionary preachers and teachers; but the Christianity was now Continental and Roman rather than Celtic in spirit and character. The leaders of Christian thought now, the new group which guided the Church of England of the eighth century, were in no whit inferior in power and devotion to their ancestors of the seventh century. First and foremost was the monk-scholar

Bede—well styled by all the Christian churches "the Venerable"—the true child of the church of Aidan and Cuthbert, of the church of Wilfrid and Theodore. Trained by Roman teachers of the highest order, the favourite pupil of Ceolfrid, the dearest friend of Benedict Biscop—whose busy life and vast powers were devoted to the introduction of Roman art and letters among his Engle fellow-countrymen in Northumbria — Bede of Jarrow could yet discern where and when and why Rome had failed in the first instance; could and did acknowledge the almost superhuman success of the Celtic work of conversion. Indeed, it is to him that we owe the inimitable pictures we possess of these Celtic teachers. Vivid and touching as was his portraiture of men like Augustine and Paulinus, Theodore and Aldhelm, yet by far the most attractive and charming of the chapters in his undying history are those which dwell on the life-stories of the Celtic saints. When he penned his memories of Aidan of Lindisfarne, of the great love and the burning eloquence, of the boundless influence among the wild Engle flock of that true saint of God; when he wrote down the story of Cuthbert with the angel face, and how the wild creatures of the moorland and the northern seas loved that minister of the living God, Bede was at his best; for when he wrote of these, he felt he was writing of the noblest and the most lovable of the makers of the Church of England.

There were others, like Bede, devoted to letters, in the many monasteries which with a strange rapidity had sprung up in different districts of the new England. At Canterbury, for instance, there was the school, renowned throughout Europe, for learning, presided over by Hadrian. Malmesbury in the west boasted the presence of Aldhelm, one of the foremost scholars in Christendom. We may quote also such communities as Barking in Wessex, under the charge of Aldhelm's pupil, Hildelida, whose correspondence, and the Latin letters penned by the sisters of her renowned house, are still read by scholars with curious admiration. Bede of Jarrow was the most distinguished by far of all the learned "religious" of both sexes who were so numerous in the first half of the eighth century in the England of the North-folk conquerors. Yet Bede was a type — a most distinguished type, but still a type—of many another monk-scholar of this great age.

Immediately after the death of the great scholar the seat of letters was transferred from his home at Jarrow to York, where we have seen that a number of trained teachers, under the rule of the archbishop of York, Egbert, the friend and pupil of Bede—made Northumbria and York positively the distributor of learning for civilised Europe. Thither flocked scholars from all parts; and this marvellous school of learning of all kinds flourished for some fifty years. Among innumerable scholars in all branches of learning trained at York, Alcuin, the famous adviser and minister in all matters connected with education and culture of the emperor Charlemagne, of course stands pre-eminent. Alcuin—for long years a pupil, then the chief teacher of the famous school, and the greatest scholar of the century—bears ample and repeated testimony to the pre-eminent grandeur of York as

the intellectua. centre of Europe. And be it remembered, *not a hundred years before*, Cuthbert and Chad were preaching to the yet pagan and uncivilised Engles, in the same districts in which arose this marvellous centre of learning and culture! Chad passed away in 672, and Cuthbert died in 687; and York was at its greatest before the year 870.

We have already briefly noticed how the royal exile Egbert at the court of the Frankish monarch, on the death of his kinsman Beohrtric, returned to his native country and was acknowledged king of Wessex; and how as years went on this same Egbert greatly extended the boundaries of Saxon Wessex towards the west; and how with scarcely a struggle, first Mercia, and then in 827, finally Northumbria, submitted to him as over-lord.

LABOURING MONKS (*p.* 304).

Northumbria, indeed, was weakened by years of internal strife, and offered no resistance to Egbert. Mercia was seemingly strong, but was made up of various Engle peoples, "who were only held together by the power of the sword." She owed her position in large measure to the conspicuous abilities of three princes, who, with little intervals, for many years sat on the Mercian throne—Ethelbald, Offa, and Cenwulf. Kent and East Anglia only obeyed her when Mercia was strong enough to keep them in a state of subjection. "The looseness of the political structure of Mercia is shown by the fact that this great Anglo-Saxon state had no real centre of government, while York was the acknowledged capital of Northumbria, and Winchester occupied a similar position in Wessex."* In Middle England the Mercian kings possessed no considerable city. The burial-place of the Mercian kings was usually Repton.

But although Egbert was acknowledged before his death as the first over-lord of the whole of England *east* of the now narrow zone occupied by the descendants of the ancient British people, it was by no means an England welded into one great and united race. Mercia and Northumbria, it is true, submitted to the over-lordship of the powerful Wessex king, paid him tribute, and agreed to follow the standard of Wessex in war; but for a long period, as we shall see, their inner life remained separate and independent as before; and, save in rare exceptional instances, the terrible ravages of the Dane were perpetrated in Northumbria and Mercia without any attempts on the part of Wessex to preserve the so-called subject countries from the repeated and destructive harryings of the Northern sea-pirates.

The one bond which really united Mercia, Northumbria, and Wessex at the beginning of the ninth century, was the Church of England. Each of the great divisions was attached with greater or less earnestness to Christianity. The whole land was covered with monasteries and nunneries; in these numerous and ever-increasing garrisons of Christianity the same life was led, the same God was worshipped, the same prayers were used, the same psalms and hymns sung; the same hopes and fears belonged to them all. Throughout this network of religious houses, which literally covered the whole area of the three kingdoms, Wessex, Mercia, and Northumbria, there was constant and friendly inter-communication. The monks of Melrose and Jarrow, the students of York, were brothers in deed as well as in name to the monks of Peterborough and Lichfield, and the students of Canterbury and Malmesbury. The nuns of Coldingham and Whitby were sisters to the nuns of Ely and Barking. For these numberless communities of monks and nuns the divisions of Northumbria and Mercia, East Anglia and Wessex, had no existence; for the dwellers in these many homes of study and of prayer, those names were merged in the grander and more comprehensive title of England.

The numerous monasteries and nunneries which had arisen in every part of the island; in important cities like Canterbury, York, and Winchester, and even amid the wolds and moors of Yorkshire,

* Compare generally Green, "Conquest of England," chap. i.

in the heart of the desolate fen lands of East Anglia, on the banks of rivers, on lofty cliffs overlooking the ocean, in the heart of yet uncleared forest lands, were more than houses of prayer and praise: they were educational citadels of Christianity, hives of useful industry, and centres of study. In the seventh century, in the years especially of Christian pioneer work, many of these communities, large and small, were also mission stations, centres from which monk-teachers went forth to tell the story of the Cross to the pagan Engle or Saxon who had settled in the conquered districts around the monastery. Then in the next stage of Christian progress, from the same religious house would monk-priests be sent out, to conduct the worship in the various little churches or chapels which were gradually rising up among the people as they became converted to Christianity.

These missionary monks after a time became the parish priests, and thus deeper and deeper the Church penetrated into the heart of the English people, and was able to influence its life. In the beginning of the ninth century, when Egbert was acknowledged the undisputed king of far-extending Wessex, and was recognised as the first over-lord of Middle and Northern England, this parochial organisation had made considerable progress in many districts of the island. Even as early as the first quarter of the eighth century we learn from the well-known letter of Bede of Jarrow to archbishop Egbert of York, that this parochial organisation was already recognised to some extent in Northumbria; and in the seventy years which followed Bede's death it was rapidly adopted. In the days of king Egbert, the over-lord of England in the first quarter of the ninth century, it had evidently extended far and wide. The Church had become the centre of village life, and the Christian priest was recognised as a person of great influence and authority.

In the everyday life of the North-folk conquerors and settlers the Christian religion which they had adopted worked a comple alteration. Gluttony and drunkenness, so common a feature of the old feasts in the public halls of kings and chieftains, were proclaimed as sins from which a Christian must rigidly abstain. Fasts, which in the Norse customs were unheard of, were enjoined. One day in every seven was set apart as holy, and was to be marked by a complete cessation from all labour. Blood feuds and revenge were denounced as utterly at variance with the first principles of Christianity, which regarded all war as evil.

We must not omit to notice the Church's attitude in regard to one of the great evils which ever afflicted all pagan nations—the curse of slavery. A considerable portion of the population of England was in a state of bondage; this sad class was constantly recruited by the family and children of the malefactor, who shared his punishment and became hereditary bondsmen. They were recruited still more largely by prisoners taken in those wars which were perpetually waged between the conquering people themselves, and between the conquerors and the remnant of the old British people. Bristol and Chester, for instance, were famous slave-markets for a lengthened period. Now the Church of England, from the days of Augustine downwards, never ceased to denounce the wicked custom;

and although the shameful evil was not eradicated, in a hundred ways the lot of these unhappy ones was ameliorated and made more tolerable.

"From the cradle to the grave new rites and ceremonies, each possessing a new and awful significance, affected every age of life. The very babe felt the change; baptism replaced an old Norse rite of dragging through the earth." As in old days, marriage continued as a public act done in the presence of the dwellers in the township; but new regulations as regarded the affinity of the "married" were introduced, and above all the solemn blessing of a priest of the Christian religion was added to the ceremony, thus investing marriage with a new and hitherto unknown sanctity. And not only in the solemn rites which accompanied birth and marriage was the difference startling. The dead were buried with a very different ritual from that used among the worshippers of the Scandinavian gods. There was no longer any burial fire, and over a mighty North-folk chief no lofty mound was piled, but "the warrior slept with his neighbours and his kinsfolk beneath the blessed protecting shade of the lowly village church." A complete and marvellous change, under the influence of the new teaching, had passed over all classes and ranks of the children of the war-loving North-folk.

Enough has been already said of the scholarship and the love of study, and the really important *results* of this devotion to letters on the part of many of the early Anglo-Saxon monks. But in agriculture also the industrial work of the Church was noteworthy. It has been most justly remarked that "if over a third of the shire belonged in later days to the clergy, it was in the main because monks and priests had been foremost in the work of reclaiming the land." In the time of Egbert the number of the conquerors that settled in England was but sparse—ridiculously small, according to our modern views of population—and as yet not half the soil had been brought under tillage. Forest land, moor and fen, covered much of the island, which had been the scene of such long and bloody fighting. In the labour of reclaiming the waste land the monks, during the hundred years which preceded the accession of Egbert, had been at work. The monks of the eighth century possessed other gifts besides the power of preaching and teaching. They were not all at work in the Scriptorium or writing-chamber, copying and illuminating manuscripts, or annotating the Scriptures and the Fathers, or busied in the study of the classics, or even Hebrew. Many of them, even some of the scholars and students, would, at the bidding of the abbot, quit their cell, and, with pick or axe or spade in hand, help to cut down woods, to drain the marsh land, to fertilise the sandy and barren soil.*

There is no doubt but that during this period of Egbert's over-lordship in England (Egbert died in 837) the south and midlands of the island, from an agricultural point of view, were fairly prosperous; only in the northern districts the perpetual feuds in the last part of the eighth century between rival claimants of the Northumbrian throne, of course seriously hindered agricultural progress. William of Poitiers at

* See generally Montalembert, "Monks of the West," and Green, "Conquest of England."

SCRIPTORIUM OF A MONASTERY.

a later period even speaks of England as "the storehouse of Ceres." Rye, barley, wheat, and oats were grown; there were large apple orchards in the cider districts; even grapes were grown, and a coarse wine was made; bee-culture in various parts of the country was common, and much honey was produced. Dean Hook calls attention to a wild pony natural to the island; there were probably a vast number of these. In the Saxon Chronicle we read how the Danes, in the course of their frequent raids, "horsed themselves." It is probable that allusion is here made to this abundance of partly wild ponies.

A comparison has been made, with some justice, between an ancient monastery—as conceived by St. Benedict, to whose order most of the greater English monasteries of the eighth century belonged—and a rich Roman villa. Gardens, mills, ovens, stables, workshops were grouped round a central building; only, instead of the maledictions of the ergastulum with the slaves dwelling in it, the music of prayer would be heard in the religious household. No doubt the lands under the shadow of the great early English monasteries were well and carefully cultivated. These lands had in many cases been reclaimed from forests and fen lands. Schools for agriculture as well as schools for varied kinds of learning were established under these English monks. As early as the last years of the seventh century Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury, and afterwards bishop of Sherborne (Aldhelm died in 709) established centres of agriculture as well as of religion and learning at Sherborne and Wareham, and probably in other places.

The description given us by William of Malmesbury* of one of these vast Fen monasteries, after allowing for some rhetorical exaggeration, gives us some idea of what these monks effected in districts of our island once covered with stagnant waters and clotted with weeds and brushwood. He is writing of Thorney Abbey, founded by St. Ethelwald (*Thorneie propter condensitatem dumorum vocata*). "It is a counterfeit of Paradise, where the gentleness and the purity of heaven appear to be reflected. In the midst of the fens rise groves of trees, which seem to touch the stars with their tall and slender tops; the charmed eye wanders over a sea of verdant herbage; the foot which treads the wide meadows meets with no obstacle in its path. Not an inch of land lies uncultivated. Here the soil is hidden by fruit-trees; there by vines spread on the ground or trained on trellises. Nature and art rival each other, the one supplying all that the other forgot to produce. What can we say of the beauty of the buildings? Who would not be astonished to see vast edifices rise upon firm foundations in the midst of the marsh? O deep and pleasant solitude! you have been given by God to the monks, so that their mortal life may daily bring them nearer to heaven!"

No review, however brief, of the spirit and influence of the English Church at the commencement of the ninth century, can omit some definite notice of the curious love of "pilgrimage," which so powerfully affected all sorts and conditions of men in the eighth and ninth centuries. The love of roaming abroad, of visiting foreign and distant lands, seems always to have been a

* Quoted by Montalembert, "Monks of the West."

characteristic feature among the North-folk. It was, no doubt, one of the causes at work which induced the early invasions of Britain on the part of Engle, Jute, and Saxon. This love of foreign adventure no doubt helped later to influence the Danish viking raids, so fatal to the England of the ninth and tenth centuries. It assisted in no small degree to popularise the Crusades in the Middle Ages—ever largely recruited with English crusaders.

In the early days of the settlement and development of Christianity in England, the passion for adventure and roaming abroad manifested itself in the many and constant pilgrimages to Rome undertaken by kings and queens, by noble and soldier; sex or age, riches or poverty, being alike disregarded by the crowds of English who in the eighth and following centuries were continually wandering to Italy, Rome and its time-honoured shrines being the constant goal which they aimed at reaching. Among its many shrines the crowd of pilgrims passed, praying, admiring, learning. Some few stayed altogether in the charmed home of the mother-church of Christendom; some returned to their native land, strengthened and enriched by what they had seen and heard and learned—a few, like Benedict Biscop, not empty-handed, but laden with treasures which Italy and Rome could alone supply. Books, manuscripts containing precious literature, sacred and profane, curious relics of bygone saints whose souls had long passed to their rest, art treasures, pictures, costly bindings of books, cunning work of craftsmen in gold and less precious metals—these were brought to England, were placed in the work-chambers of the great monasteries, where the art treasures served as models for the English monk-artists to copy or to dream over.

As early as the year 689 Ceadwalla, king of Wessex, one of the Woden-descended Saxon chieftains, gave up his crown for the sake of being baptized at the tomb of St. Peter. The bishop of Rome—Pope Sergius—performed himself the sacred rite; but the king, we read, died not many days after the solemn baptismal service. Only a few years before, this West Saxon monarch had won a widely extended fame as a fierce warrior. Ina, who followed Ceadwalla on the Wessex throne, and who owes his fame specially to the code of laws which bears his name, with his queen Ethelburga, in the year 728, laying aside the royal dignity, went as humble pilgrims to Rome. The story relates how king Ina when at Rome chose to remain unknown and unhonoured; and, lost among the crowds of poor pilgrims, gained his livelihood by the work of his hands. This same royal pilgrim in the days of his power had founded hard by the Vatican a school under the name of Schola Saxonum, for the training and education of his countrymen who desired to study under the shadow of the basilica of St. Peter. Attached to the school was a church and a burying-ground.

Six other kings in the same age are reckoned among the crowd of "Roman" pilgrims. The attraction which drew the Anglo-Saxons in this early age to the Eternal City seems to have been irresistible; princes and bishops, monks and nuns, men and women of all ranks, crowded the pilgrims' way. The royal examples gave especial energy to the movement; and the dangers and hardships of the long

journey never seem to have occurred to these restless seekers after God. The route was the one now so well known to the travel-loving Englishman. Crossing to a port close by the modern Boulogne, the pilgrims passed through France by way of Burgundy and Savoy to the Mont Cenis pass. The number of these English wanderers was so great that they gave their name to a quarter of the Eternal City—the Vicus Saxonum, situated in the immediate neighbourhood of St. Peter.*

Bede gives this quaint reason for his countrymen's curious passion for this Roman pilgrimage. "They came to make acquaintance in their life-time with the saints, by whom they hoped to be well received in Heaven." But the curious saying of the scholar-monk seems to be rather his kindly apology for a curious and popular fancy on the part of his countrymen; for Bede never appears to have thought it necessary in his own case to make this earthly acquaintance with the saints in Italy and in Rome. Bede himself scarcely ever left his student's cell of Jarrow, and the extent of his pilgrimage was the "school of York," where the work he loved so well was being carried on and developed by his pupils.

One effect of these popular pilgrimages was the bringing the English peoples of the several northern tribes into contact with the rest of the western world; and this intercourse with a richer and more cultured civilisation was one of the fruitful results of the change, wrought mainly by Wilfrid, which had taken place in the character of the Church of England. The mission work of the Englishmen, Boniface and Willibrord and their companions, great and far reaching though it was, would never have accomplished this so effectually as did the constant passage of these crowds of pilgrim travellers through the various countries of western Europe. The barrier between Britain and the Continent, which had existed from the days when the Roman legions left Britain in the fifth century, was thus broken down, to the great advantage of English commerce and general progress in the island.

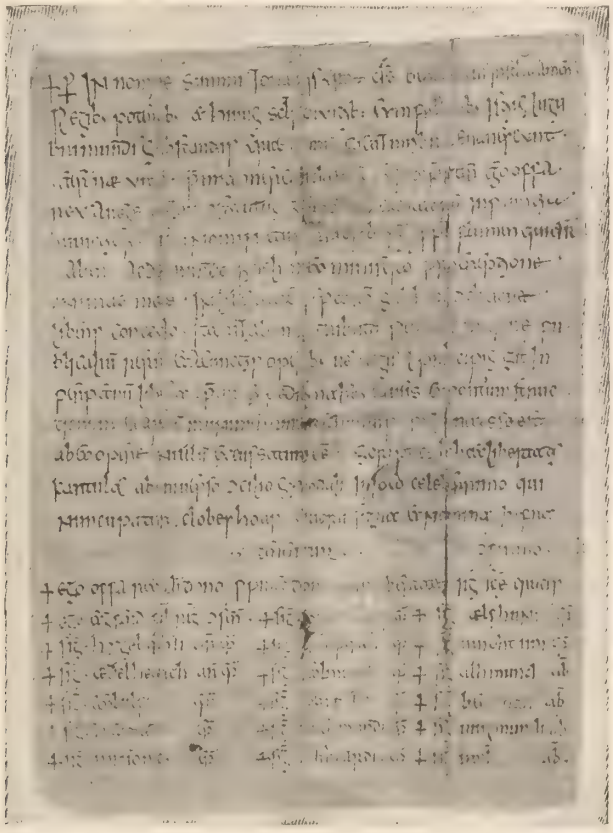
When Egbert was over-lord, there were as many as seventeen bishops of English sees. This increase in the episcopate was due to the efforts of Theodore, A.D. 668 to 690. These seventeen prelates, about an equal number of ealdermen, a few abbots, and some fifty thanes, composed the Witan, or public assembly of the three kingdoms, after they were nominally united under Egbert. But the actual number present at the ordinary meetings of the great council was far below these numbers.

The sees in question were as follows: Canterbury, Rochester, Sidnacester, Dunwich, Elmham, Winchester, Sherborne, Lichfield, Hereford, Worcester, Lindsey, Leicester, Selsey, York, Lindisfarne, Hexham, Whitherne.* Of these Dunwich and Elmham in the eastern counties (East Anglia) have disappeared. The see of Norwich has been substituted for them as the East Anglian bishopric. Sherborne has given place to Salisbury; the see was removed to Old Sarum in the reign of William the Conqueror. Lindsey in early days was some time reckoned as part of the kingdom of Northumbria, some time as

* Green, "Conquest of England."

* See Bishop Stubbs' "Constitutional History of England."

belonging to Mercia, when the power of the great Middle Engle realm was in the ascendant ; it, too, has disappeared, and constitutes a portion of the see of Lincoln. The district of Lindsey lay



CHARTER OF OFFA, KING OF MERCIA, GRANTING LAND TO AETHELMUND, GIVEN AT CLOVESHOE A.D. 793–796.*

immediately to the south of the Humber. Leicester has become part of the see of Peterborough ; it has in quite recent days given a title to a suffragan bishop. The bishoprics of Lindisfarne and Hexham have entirely vanished. The see of Durham until quite lately, when the see of Newcastle was carved out of it, included all the north-east of England, from Yorkshire to the Scottish border. Whitherne, the traditional site of St. Ninian's see, is no longer the seat of a bishopric, and is now part of Scotland.

Without attempting here anything of the nature of a detailed account of the possessions of the Church, which at so early a period in the story of the settlement of the Northmen in Britain, made so

* Witnesses, Æthelheard (Ethelhard), archbishop of Canterbury ; Hygebert (Higbert), archbishop of Lichfield, and other bishops.

firm a lodgment in the hearts of the hitherto undisciplined worshippers of Woden and Thor, it will be well to give a very brief outline of the *Endowments*, which, through the generosity and goodwill of the conquering tribes, the Church of England, from the first days of its existence under the Engle and Saxon rule, became possessed of. These Endowments mainly consisted of:—

1st. Permanent gifts of land. Of an instance of such a gift we have historical evidence as early as A.D. 658; a yet earlier well-known example is afforded in the Jutish kingdom of Kent, where lands and royal buildings were given to Augustine by king Ethelbert.

2nd. Voluntary offerings on the part of the people, of a temporary and probably of a varying nature.

3rd. The revival of a much earlier recognised obligation among Christian peoples in the form of the Tithe.

The first endowments of the Church consisted in gifts of land, which at a very early stage of this period of the conversion of the Engles and Saxons to Christianity were bestowed on monastic houses, on bishops, and on minster churches—such, for instance, as was the grant of land made by king Oswiu of Northumberland, "sufficient for the maintenance of ten families," to the abbess Hilda, for the endowment of her new religious house at Streoneshalch (Whitby) in the year 658.

This system of *endowment by land* became very popular among the North-folk conquerors. During the Anglo-Saxon times we see, from the entries in Domesday Book compiled by the order of William the Conqueror, that very large landed estates had come into the possession of the Church. The greater part of these territorial acquisitions had passed into the hands of churchmen by free gift. The donors were kings of Kent, Mercia, Wessex, Northumbria, and East Anglia; queens, princes, princesses, nobles, and others. As early as the days of Bede, complaint was made that the monasteries engrossed too large a share of the public land. In his letter to Egbert of York, the monk of Jarrow thus writes: "Positively there is no place left for estates for sons of nobles or of distinguished soldiers."

Time went on. Before Bede's death, in 735, the need for clergy to minister in villages and hamlets more or less remote from cities or the monasteries was felt, and as these parochial clergy increased in number, the necessity of providing a suitable maintenance for them was felt. Voluntary gifts from the people, eked out sometimes by the bestowal of a little estate, probably by the thane of the place, supplied their need; but voluntary gifts are at best uncertain and precarious.

Among these voluntary but occasional gifts and offerings, during the period of the settlement of the North-folk in Britain, was the *tithe*, an existing and generally recognised obligation among Christian peoples. It can be clearly traced back more than two hundred years before the foundation of the Anglo-Saxon Church—probably to a yet earlier date. As the ministers of religion rapidly increased on the continent under the rule of Charlemagne, and in England under the government of the Christian Engle and Saxon kings in the eighth century, as a partial provision for this rapidly

multiplying body of clergy, the tithe, hitherto a voluntary offering—the payment of which, however, had been preached as a duty—was now gradually enforced by legal sanctions from the state. The emperor Charlemagne, on the continent of Europe, in the year 779, ordained that everyone should pay tithe, and that the proceeds should be disposed of by the bishop. Very shortly after—in the year 787—it was enforced in England by a church council held at Chalchyth (some identify it with Chelsea). At this council legates from the bishop of Rome were present. This was, with one other instance, the only occasion where legates from Rome sat in an Anglo-Saxon council. King Offa of Mercia and his aldermen attended this famous meeting, and gave it the authority of a Witanagemot.

From this time (A.D. 787) many of the English laws issued after the death of Alfred contain some mention of tithe; for instance, king Athelstan (A.D. 925) directed his own reeves (or bailiffs) to pay tithes. By a law of king Edmund (A.D. 944), passed at a national synod of both the archbishops and many bishops in London, the penalty of excommunication was denounced against those who would not pay their tithes. The legislation of king Edgar (A.D. 970) is somewhat minute on the subject. His laws were the first to appoint definite times and seasons for the payment of tithes, and to provide the means of enforcing it by temporal penalties. This law was repeated by king Canute, and is also found in the collection of Anglo-Saxon laws sometimes erroneously ascribed to king Henry I. Among the laws of Edward the Confessor, confirmed by William the Conqueror, the first place is given to the laws of "the Holy Mother the Church," among which is one relating to tithes. This law of the Conqueror provides for the recovery of tithes in the Bishop's Court, with aid, if required, from the King's Court.

As regards the determination of the church to which the tithe was to be paid, amongst other directions, king Edgar in his laws directs it to be paid to the "eald (old) minster," or mother church, to which the district belonged. It seems that the Cathedral was the nominal recipient, and the bishop the distributor. But in Anglo-Saxon times the actual determination was really left very much to the owner of the land from which the tithe arose. Monasteries were no doubt often favoured by those land owners who desired in return the benefit of their intercessions. Nor was it until the Westminster Council, held in 1200, that the principle was laid down that the parochial clergy had the first claim on tithe.*

* See generally—the references in Bishop Stubbs' "Constitutional History of England," chap. viii.; and Lord Selborne, "Defence of the Church of England," chap. vii.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FRANKISH EMPIRE AND THE ENGLISH CHURCH.

Origin of the Franks—Family of Pépin—Influence of English Missionaries in the Frankish Empire—Wilfrid, Willibrord, and Boniface—Their Allegiance to Rome—Influence of Englishmen upon Roman Sovereignty—Frankish Alliance between Church and State—Charlemagne—Alcuin the English Scholar, Charlemagne's Minister of Education—Charlemagne and Image-worship—Alcuin on the Duty of a Bishop—Death of Charlemagne and Misfortunes of his Dynasty—Charlemagne and Offa of Mercia—Plot of Jaenbert, Archbishop of Canterbury—Offa establishes an Arch-see at Lichfield by Arrangement with the Pope—Synod of Cealchythe—Speedy Restoration of the Arch-primacy of Canterbury.

WHILE the settlement of the Northern conquerors in Britain was gradually shaping itself, and Christianity, through the various influences already dwelt upon, was becoming every year an increasing power in the island, great changes, which more or less reacted upon Britain, were taking place in the history of the continent of Europe.

Among the Teutonic peoples, who in the wreck of the Roman domination came to the front, that great confederation of tribes known as the Franks was the most prominent. But the numerous tribes known under that subsequently world-famed name were generally but only loosely bound together; and it was not until a victory won at Testri by a chieftain of the Eastern Franks named Pépin, of Herstall, had put an end to the internal feuds and dissensions among their leaders and kings, that they took the important place in the northern European countries to which their vast numbers and natural abilities would seem to have entitled them.

The battle of Testri was fought in the year 687, the year of Cuthbert's death, only seven years after the passing away of the abbess Hilda of Whitby; just when the "settlement" in England was assuming a definite shape, when the disciples of Cædmon were writing their English poems, when Theodore and Wilfrid Hadrian and Aldhelm, were moulding the Church of England after their will in the Roman obedience, when the student Bede was learning in his Jarrow cell the secrets of the craft he afterwards used so well and faithfully. From the great day of Testri the Frankish nation has ever held a foremost place among the nations of the world. In arms, in literature, in religion, the historian has to reckon with the part played by that great people, who were born, so to speak, into the family of European nations when the eastern Frankish chieftain, Pépin of Herstall, after his Testri victory, gradually welded into one powerful nation the various disunited Frankish tribes.

The descendants and heirs of Pépin were singularly able and distinguished men. Charles Martel, his son and successor, will ever be remembered gratefully as the western soldier who succeeded in rolling back definitively the tide of eastern invasion, which, under the

seemingly irresistible Mahommedan spirit of religious conquest, at one time gravely threatened even central and northern Gaul. Another Pépin, known as "le Bref," became, in the year 741, the acknowledged sovereign of the now broad domains of his father and grandfather, and was crowned king of the great Frankish monarchy, which, in a somewhat irregular line, may be said, roughly, to have extended from Friesland, washed by the northern seas, to the Pyrenees in the south of Gaul; from the shores of the Atlantic on the west, to the Elbe and the Danube on the east. King Pépin le Bref's son, under the famous name of Charlemagne, ruled over the same magnificent inheritance, but enormously increased by conquest. His

THE FRANKISH EMPIRE.

mighty empire included, generally, modern France, most of the German dominions ruled over by the imperial houses of Hohenzollern and Hapsburg, Italy largely, and certainly the northern provinces of Spain. In other words, Charlemagne's dominions stretched from Brittany to the mountains of Bohemia, and from Saragossa to the mouth of the Elbe. Charlemagne reigned from 768 to 814 — the period included in the literary supremacy of York. It was as minister and friend of this magnificent monarch that Alcuin, the pupil first, and afterwards the teacher in the schools of York, won his great religious reputation.

The connection between England and the Franks, in the early days of their power, was more intimate than is popularly supposed. Frisia, a great tract of country on the borders of the Zuyder Zee and along the banks of the Scheldt, covering much of what is now known as Holland, had been visited, it will be remembered, by bishop Wilfrid, who preached to the savage pagan inhabitants with some success in the year 678, on the occasion of one of his journeys to Rome. A few years later, in 690–691, the Frisian mission, which seems, perhaps from the extreme difficulty of the work there, to have possessed a peculiar attraction for the fervid zeal of the English and Saxon preachers, was again taken up by an earnest student trained in Wilfrid's monastery at Ripon, and who afterwards attained to great fame as the successful apostle of the Frisians, under the name of Willibrord. This Willibrord was entrusted as a child by his mother to the Ripon monks, and subsequently spent some time in the great Irish monasteries, being desirous of profiting by the Irish learning, and wishing to share in the Celtic austerities practised in those famous prayer-homes.

Willibrord and twelve companions were welcomed by Pépin of Herstall, who had lately annexed Frisia to the Frankish dominions. Some think Willibrord's mission was even undertaken at Pépin's request; certainly he was ever warmly supported in his missionary work by the great Frankish chief, who believed that the wild Frisian tribes would, if converted to Christianity, become his faithful subjects. The firm friendship between the Engle missionary and Pépin seems to have been lifelong. Willibrord, no doubt owing to his early training under Wilfrid's influence, was a devoted believer in Rome, her traditions and her vast claims, and from Rome sought higher sanction for his Frisian work. Pope Sergius consecrated him archbishop of the Frisians, and fixed the seat of his archbishopric in the old Roman station of Trajectum, afterwards known as Utrecht. It was a noble career, this of Willibrord, and it lasted for many years, being only closed by his death in extreme old age in 739. For some forty-six years he had laboured with varying success among the pagans of these distant Frankish provinces.

Willibrord was joined in the year 718 by another English monk, who subsequently, under Frankish protection, obtained even greater fame than his master as a successful missionary pioneer. This was Winfrid, a young West Saxon, born in the last quarter of the seventh century at Crediton, in the Wessex country, and who was the friend in early life of Ina, the well-known Wessex

king, who admired the young Winfrid's learning and zeal. Winfrid joined the Frisian mission of Willibrord; like his master, he too was a devoted adherent and believer in the Roman obedience. The Frankish chieftain, Charles Martel, recognised his great powers, and through his long and stirring career warmly assisted him. He was consecrated bishop without any definite see under the name of Boniface. In 731 Pope Gregory III. made him archbishop and Roman legate. His work lasted for many years. In the rapid rise of the Frankish power, archbishop Boniface was perhaps the most distinguished instrument in the consolidation of the power of the Franks, especially in their Rhine provinces. His labours were indefatigable, and were, on the whole, crowned with singular success. In 743 we find him archbishop of Mainz, on the Rhine, with a Frankish diocese stretching through the Rhine countries from Cologne to Strasbourg. He founded several important sees in Germany—at Erfurt, Würzburg, Eichstadt, etc., and established the renowned religious house of Fulda, which became a famous centre of missionary enterprise. In his later years this Boniface rose unquestionably into the greatest church figure of his day on the continent of Europe.

The friendship of Boniface with Charles Martel and his sons remained ever unbroken. To this family of Frankish chiefs he acknowledged his deep obligations, and referred his singular success in his missionary labours to their steady and unvarying support. "Without your aid," we find him writing to Charles Martel, "I could neither control the people, nor defend the priests, nor prevent pagan and idolatrous rites in Germany." He showed his gratitude to Pépin le Bref, who had so loyally supported him and furthered his plans, by procuring his formal coronation as king of the vast Frankish realms in 751–2.

This extraordinary man, one of the greatest sons of the Church of England, was wholly devoted to his noble work as an evangelist; and although he had reached the summit of human ambition, he seems to have cared little or nothing for power and grandeur, save as instruments in carrying out his designs for the salvation of souls. At length old and infirm, decrepit in body and worn out by excessive labours, he resigned to his companion Lull his important office as archbishop of Mainz, and went out once more as a simple missionary among the Frisians, where he had laboured years before, and who in many wild districts were still pagans. He ended his glorious career as a martyr, being slain by the very people he loved so well. This was in the year A.D. 755.

It is, of course, impossible in a history devoted to the Church of England to go beyond the limits of a brief sketch of the life and work of such men as Willibrord and Boniface in Holland and Germany. It is one of the many proofs of the wonderful vitality and power of the early Anglo-Saxon church, that in the first century of her existence as a church, she could send out into the continent of Europe preachers and organisers of such extraordinary power and wisdom as Willibrord and the yet more famous Boniface. The reader of our story, however, must not be

led through the meagreness of this little life-sketch to underrate the vast work of some of these famous Englishmen, nobly supported by a numerous and often-recruited band of their fellow-countrymen. What they accomplished, measured by ordinary standards, seems incredible ; such mighty results, it is not too much to say, could only have been carried out by men who were the immediate successors and sharers of the spirit of those matchless Celtic teachers, whose grand work in England we have been relating.

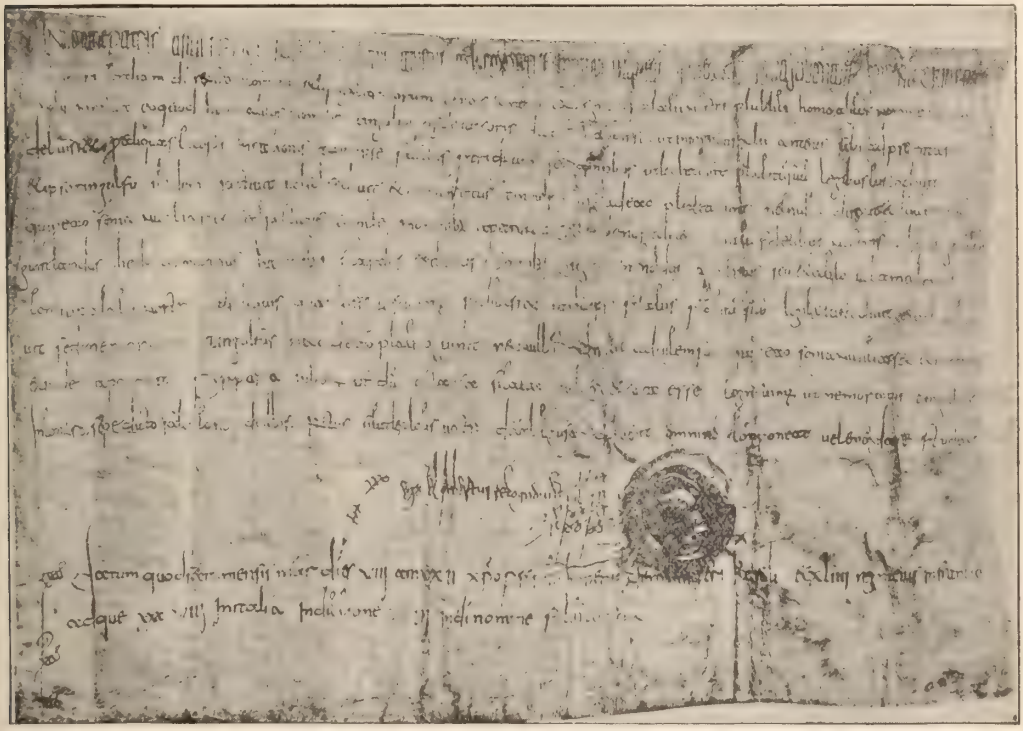
It must be remembered that the work of Willibrord and Boniface stretched from the desolate dunes of Frisia and the shores of the wild North Sea, through the lands watered by the Rhine, the Moselle, and the Elbe—far to the south where the still blue waters of the Lake of Constance bathe the slopes of the white Alps. These famous missionaries for the most part had to do with pagan tribes ; they not only gathered round them vast masses of very imperfectly civilised peoples, drawn from many German races, listening to, and many convinced by, their burning words—this was comparatively speaking an easy task—but what was more wonderful they built up a great Christian church, organised with no little care and skill, in those wide-stretching countries which lay between the salt waters of the Zuyder Zee and the Alp-fed Lake of Constance. Two important archbishoprics—the one in Utrecht, the other at Mainz, ruling over many subordinate bishoprics, centres of Christian work and Christian progress which have endured without a break from the days of the famous Englishmen, Willibrord and Boniface, down to our own times—eleven hundred eventful years—bear their weighty testimony to the enduring nature of the work.

It was owing to the religious, far-seeing Frankish chieftains, the two Pépins and Charles Martel, to the steady, never-failing, consistent support of this all-powerful Frankish family, in great measure, that the two famous Englishmen and their disciples were enabled to accomplish their mighty work ; and Bóniface, as we have seen, was not slow to acknowledge the great debt. But no Frankish king or chieftain, however wise and far-seeing, would ever have seen such undreamed-of results without the aid of such divinely taught instruments as Willibrord and Boniface ; and behind these Englishmen was the spirit which nerved Aidan and Chad and Cuthbert—even the very Spirit of God and His Christ, whose work these men were raised up to carry out. Truly a portion of the spirit of the Celtic teachers had fallen upon these apostles of Frisia and Germany ; and it was the possession of this divine gift which inspired these Englishmen, and gave them strength and power to do the difficult task to which their Master had called them.

But to the irresistible power, the strange and passionate tenderness, and to their intense conviction of the truth of the marvellous and gracious story they were telling, which they inherited from the great Celtic masters who converted pagan England from the worship and service of Woden and Thor to the worship and service of Christ, these English missionaries to Frisia and Germany in the eighth century added another force unknown to Aidan or Cuthbert—a reverence at times even passing into a superstition, for

law and order, tradition and obedience, as represented by the great and venerable see of Rome. This reverence for Rome as the centre of Christian unity, and their connection with the vast and powerful Roman organisation, gave to the Germany were men carefully trained in the Roman-taught schools of Wilfrid and Theodore.

The intense devotion of these men to Rome throughout their wonderful careers, has been a matter for the deepest regret to



A JUDGMENT OF CHARLEMAGNE, A.D. 812. *Paris, Arch. Nat. K.* 716-18.

labours of Willibrord and Boniface from the first a permanent and enduring character. Their successful work in Holland and Germany resulted in no isolated and solitary Christian forts and strongholds, but in *permanent* garrisons of the spiritual monarchy of Rome over the West. While possessing in an extraordinary degree the preaching and teaching powers of the Celtic masters, the apostles of Frisia and some writers, and of the warmest admiration to others. It was from Rome they sought again and again all spiritual authority for the work on which their hearts were fixed. It was from Rome that Willibrord sought and received his episcopal commission to form and to mould his Frisian church. It was to Rome that Boniface journeyed again and again, when he sought for fresh powers, when he wrote

for direction and support. The union between the successful English missionaries and the Roman see was at once intimate and enduring.

We have here brought prominently before us a fact which many historians have strangely lost sight of, and which brings into unexpectedly strong relief the influence of our British island upon the destinies of the world. For good or for evil, Englishmen have largely contributed to establish the spiritual sovereignty of Rome. The action of Wilfrid in the latter part of the seventh and in the early years of the eighth century, in his repeated reference to the Roman see as the supreme court of appeal in matters connected with the Church of England, coupled with the virtual acquiescence in the end of archbishop Theodore in the Roman decisions, gave the sanction of a powerful and independent national church to the still shadowy Roman claims of a universal authority; claims which were in after-years enormously exaggerated, and in time came to exert such a baneful influence upon Christendom. Then in the eighth century, the strong bias of the English Willibrord and Boniface in favour of Rome, had the effect of binding the Frankish reigning house—the most powerful dynasty the world had witnessed since the days of the great Cæsars—with the strongest ties of gratitude and interest to the same powerful Italian church. It is not too much to say, that the greatness of the Papacy in the Middle Ages sprang in great measure from the recognition of its authority by the German church, which Willibrord and Boniface built up. The two eminent English missionaries *brought Rome and the Franks together*. Rome saw in the Franks a mighty power which could effectually protect her from the pretensions and formidable claims of the Eastern Church to supremacy, claims backed by the still far-reaching power of the Eastern Emperor reigning at Constantinople—Rome's most dreaded opponent. And the house of Charles Martel and Pépin le Bref recognised in Rome a source of religious authority which could give, if it pleased, a sacred sanction to their assumption of sovereign rule over the whole Frankish nation.

Boniface, the missionary archbishop of Mainz, was the chief instrument who brought about this union between the two powers—Rome and the Franks; and Pépin le Bref received the guerdon of his steady support of Rome and her pretensions to a universal supremacy in the Church, when he was anointed king of the great dominion of the Franks, with the formal assent of Boniface, the Legate of the Roman see. The supreme title of king, which among the Franks had been hitherto borne, though for some time without sovereign power, by another house, the Merovings, was thus formally transferred to Pépin le Bref and his heirs, by the highest religious sanction in the western world.

It was the singular fortune of the famous House of Charlemagne, which had succeeded in welding into one nation so many various tribes and peoples, that for several generations its acting chief was a man of conspicuous ability—not only a brave and skilful general, but a born ruler of men. Such was Pépin of Herstall, the founder

of the Frankish power, the victor at Testri. Such was Charles Martel, who effectually stayed the Mohammedan invaders in their awful progress through Europe, the conqueror of Abderrahman in the decisive battle of Tours. Such was Pépin le Bref, his son, who, with the aid of the English missionary, archbishop Boniface, received the church's sanction to his assuming the ensigns of kingly dignity, and henceforth to his ruling over the vast Frankish nation as the anointed of the church. But, great and distinguished as had been the first three chiefs of the Franks, the fourth of this illustrious line, the son of Pépin le Bref, eclipsed them all, and in the glory of Charlemagne —to use by anticipation the name by which he is best known in history—the career of his distinguished ancestors has been almost forgotten.

Charlemagne succeeded his father, Pépin le Bref, in the year 768, when our English school of York was at the height of its prosperity, and was regarded as the chief literary centre on this side the Alps. His magnificent reign lasted some forty-six years, until 814. The vast dominions which Charlemagne inherited from his father, Pépin le Bref, were enormously increased by successive conquests, until they included roughly the modern countries of France, the north of Spain, Holland, Belgium, most of the German territories of the German and Austrian Empires, Switzerland and Italy.

Charlemagne is perhaps the greatest favourite of history. He unites in himself all the varied attributes of the most popular and loved heroes; the chivalry of the semi-fabulous Arthur, the wisdom and love of learning of Alfred, the religious fervour of St. Louis, the gallantry and bravery of Cœur de Lion; while the wide extent of his vast dominions forbid any comparison with him on the side of boundless power and world-wide influence. He has been to so many generations in all parts of the world the great and loved hero-king, that there is no little danger of the real Charlemagne shading into a mythic personage as his form recedes into the mists of the past. The splendour of his story grows brighter, and men too often think of him as the romantic hero of Roncesvalles, surrounded by his twelve fabulous peers, and forget that he was a man of flesh and blood, very great but very erring; a warrior and a statesman of the highest order, fitted exactly for his own age, but certainly not that perfect character, that mirror of nobility and chivalry which different writers of different ages have loved to portray. As a man he was the inferior of the English Alfred or the French St. Louis, who were examples of that purity of life, alas! never attained by Charlemagne.

With writers of every age the mighty emperor is naturally a favourite, for he was the steady and consistent patron of letters, and as the all-powerful head of the Holy Roman Empire, in an age of semi-barbarism, was able to do a work for literature and learning such as perhaps no other man has ever had it in his power to accomplish, and schools in various branches of learning which had been confined to Rome and a few Italian cities on the Continent, and to certain religious communities in Ireland, and, later, to the monasteries of Jarrow, York, and Canterbury, from the

days of Charlemagne became the heritage of not a few centres in his broad dominions, where art and literature were from his time sedulously cultivated. But the man who prompted all this useful and far-reaching work, who directed the great Frankish chieftain's mind in his love for letters and for art, and in his care for religion and education, was the English Alcuin, the faithful follower and disciple of Hadrian of Canterbury, of Bede of Jarrow, of Egbert and Albert of York. Alcuin became in the period of Charlemagne's greatest power his friend and favourite, then his adviser. He acted the part, to use a modern term, of "minister of education and religion" to the mighty king and emperor.

CHARLEMAGNE.
(From the Picture by Albrecht Dürer)

We have traced already the useful and brilliant career of the English scholar, the most distinguished of the York teachers. Impressed with his learning, the Frankish emperor induced him to give up his native country and his work at York, and to devote his life's energies to his service. We soon find him permanently attached to Charle-

magne's court, and for eight years remained under the monarch's all-powerful protection, teaching and establishing fresh schools, restoring in many centres of the vast empire the knowledge of the sacred languages, the perishing text of the Bible, and the service-book—doing not a little, he knew so well, and with their assistance established numberless schools in Gaul and Germany. He constantly sent to York for more books and fresh helpers. Wherever Alcuin was, English scholars visited him, and often remained permanently with him. Indeed, North-

RECEPTION OF ALGULPH (*p.* 322).

also, towards bringing back the moral rigour of ecclesiastical discipline. In 790 we find him again in his native England, but not to remain; and after 792 he remained constantly attached to the brilliant court of Charlemagne. But all this time his connection with England and the Church of England was most intimate. From York he drew a number of scholars trained in the school umbria in the last years of the eighth century was rapidly decaying, and for its students and men of letters it was too precarious a home; hence many were glad to find fresh work under the powerful protection of the Frankish sovereign of Europe.

A curious anecdote is quoted by Lingard from Alcuin's biographer, illustrative of the jealousy with which the numbers of

English who were brought to Charlemagne's dominions by Alcuin were regarded by some of the Frankish nation. "When Aigulph, an English priest, was entering the monastery of Tours, where Alcuin was residing, four of the French clergy were standing at the gate, and one of them exclaimed in his own language, 'When will this house be delivered from the crowds of Britons who swarm to that old man (Alcuin) like so many bees?'" The love of Alcuin for York and England, and the high estimation in which this true scholar and theologian held the literary resources of his native country, appear from such passages in his letters as the following:—"I feel bitterly the need of those priceless books of learning which I had in my own country, by the loving industry of my masters, and in some measure by our own humble labours. Let me send some of my youths over to bring back to France the flowers of Britain" (Alcuin to Charlemagne, in 796, written from Tours). Alcuin knew that it was to the Church of England Charlemagne looked for libraries and for scholars.

We still possess a fair number of the great Englishman's writings—notably a valuable biography of Willibrord, the Frisian apostle, and many Latin poems, some of high merit. There is one on the destruction of Lindisfarne—one, if not the earliest, of the long and terrible raids of the sea pirates, on whose eventful story we are presently to enter. The most important and generally interesting of his writings is however, after all, the collection of his letters, nearly three hundred of which have been preserved. Some of these are written to correspondents in England, to English kings, bishops, abbots, monks; some are couched in a lighter vein to pupils and friends, and to the women whose friendship he valued; others of a graver and more business-like character are addressed to the emperor Charlemagne, the bishop of Rome, and the patriarch of Jerusalem. It is not one of the least of the glories of the school of York to have produced so brilliant and devoted a scholar. To him we owe most of our knowledge of York, that noble home of learning and theology of the eighth century, and from whence issued much, if not the greater part, of the material which produced the renaissance of letters and education on the Continent.

In the next century we shall have to relate how all the libraries collected by Benedict Biscop, Aldhelm, Bede, and others with so much care and pains, perished; how well-nigh all the noble houses of prayer and study were sacked and burned in our England; how for a considerable period a deep dark night of misery and ignorance settled over the unhappy island. But it is a proud thought for every true lover of England, that before the awful calamities of the ninth century desolated our shores, Alcuin and his band of York scholars had won the confidence of the all-powerful Frankish ruler of Europe; that, under his strong arm and generous protection, these men had carried English learning into a hundred foreign centres, where it lived and flourished; and that thus was handed on to coming generations the burning lamp of religion and literature. It is no exaggeration to assert that the church schools of York

were the fount and origin of the literature of mediæval Europe.

Charlemagne was not only a warrior and a successful conqueror, not only a great statesman and ruler; he was an ardent lover of literature and learning; and theology he regarded as the centre of the intellectual system, round which the liberal sciences circled. He himself was no mean theologian; hence no doubt his admiration of and enduring friendship for the English Alcuin. Now one of the most important theological questions which affected the Church at that time was the position which sacred images and pictures were to occupy in Christian teaching.

Pope Gregory the Great had enunciated the principle, that pictures and images might be employed for the purpose of exciting devotional feelings, and of instructing the simple and unlearned, but that care was to be taken against the worship of both, a danger which he foresaw. The Byzantine emperor, Leo the Isaurian (729–730), put forth an edict requiring the demolition of images. Constantine Copronymus, the son of the emperor Leo, convened a council of 338 bishops at Constantinople in the year 754, which carried out the policy of Leo. The fathers of Constantinople anathematised all who would represent the Incarnate Word by material form or colours, and an order was made to remove all images, whether statues or pictures, from the churches. Until 787 the Iconoclasts — the destroyers of images and pictures—carried all before them in the Eastern church.

Rome, however, was bitterly opposed to this strange and exaggerated teaching, and in the East a complete reaction took place under the influence of the empress Irene, who convened another great Council of 350 prelates at Nice. This council, known as the Second Council of Nice, reversed completely the policy which condemned images, and restored them to the churches, allowing an honourable, though an inferior, worship to be offered to them as sacred symbols. The date of this second Council of Nice was A.D. 787.

Charlemagne and the Gallican church, no doubt largely under the influence of Alcuin, refused to accept the decrees of this Council, and the Frankish sovereign—he was not yet proclaimed emperor—put forth a learned and most able work convicting the second Council of Nice of giving its sanction to simple idolatry. This work, known as the Caroline Books—"*Quatuor Libri Carolini*"—was sent before promulgation to Alcuin, at that time in York, for revision and correction. Some have suspected that the writer of the books in question was Alcuin himself. There is little doubt, however, that the Frankish sovereign was the real author, although probably Alcuin had a large share in their composition.

In the year 794, under Charlemagne, an important Church Council met at Frankfort, attended by a vast crowd of bishops from every part of the Frankish realm, which then included the largest portion of continental Europe. Alcuin, at Charlemagne's request, was present at the deliberations. Although the exaggerations which disfigured the Iconoclasts were avoided, the second Nicene Council was condemned, and the worship of images,

SWORD OF CHARLEMAGNE.
(*Hofburg, Vienna.*)

"as being that which God's church execrates," under the terms worship, adoration, and service of any kind, was forbidden.

The judgment of Charlemagne and the Frankfort Council in the matter of sacred images and pictures—in which judgment we see the mind of Alcuin, Charlemagne's master and teacher in theology, clearly reflected—has ever been the guide of the more thoughtful and sober-minded teachers in the western church on this question. For history repeats itself, and the unhappy error sanctioned by the second Council of Nice has often appeared and reappeared with greater or less prominence in the story of the Catholic church. The desert wanderings of the chosen people, the history of Israel and Judah, again and again tell us how men's worship is ever attracted to something visible—to the sun, the moon, the objects of Nature—to the sacred image, however hideous and repulsive, representing the Unseen. In the Reformation of the sixteenth century, seven centuries after the days of Charlemagne and his minister Alcuin, one of the gravest errors combated and vanquished in the reformed catholic Church of England was the undue reverence paid to images—a reverence that too often glided into a scarcely veiled idolatry. The views of the wise Alcuin and of his imperial master, Charlemagne, in the all-important matter of this fatal error of image worship, were generally adopted by the fathers of the Reformation in England.

Alcuin, as we have seen, was an indefatigable scholar, and is justly regarded as one of the chief early mediæval workers in the preservation of the true text of the sacred writings. As an expositor he is of little value. His work-filled life—especially during his later years when he was attached to the court of Charlemagne—was not the quiet, reposeful existence necessary for the labours of a true expositor. But as a church reformer and organiser the famous York scholar will ever occupy a distinguished place in the annals of Christianity. His letter to archbishop Ethelhard of Canterbury, written in 796, admirably summarises Alcuin's mind on the subject of a great prelate's duties, and shows us what must have been the general tenour of his advice to Charlemagne in the momentous work of organising and reforming churches and schools throughout the almost boundless dominions of the mighty European emperor.

PART OF SCABBARD OF THE SWORD OF CHARLEMAGNE.

Ethelhard lived in very troublous times, and in the exercise of what he deemed his duty had incurred much unpopularity. Believing that his life was in danger, the shepherd forsook his flock and left his great charge. Alcuin, Charlemagne's minister, who was archbishop Ethelhard's friend, took upon himself gravely to rebuke the faint-heartedness of the archbishop, and urged him in the course of a famous epistle to reconsider the motives of his flight, remembering that "the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep." "Return," wrote Alcuin to Ethelhard; and then in words which deserve to be remembered indeed in our Church of England as the noblest advice ever given by a great son of that church to her chief shepherds, he went on to write, "and bring back to the House of God the youths that were studying there, the choir of singers, and the penmen with their books, that the Church may regain its beautiful order, and future primates may be trained up under her care. And for yourself, let your preaching be constant in all places—whether in presence of the bishops in full synod, whom it is your duty to admonish to be regular in holding ordinations, earnest in preaching, careful of their churches, strict in enforcing the holy rite of baptism, and bountiful in alms; or whether it be for the good of the souls of the poor in different churches and parishes, especially among the people of Kent, over whom God has been pleased to appoint you to preside. Above all, let it be your strictest care to restore the reading of the Holy Scriptures, that the Church may be exalted with honour, and that your holy see, which was first in the faith, may be first in all wisdom and holiness; where the inquirer after truth may find an answer, the ignorant know what he desires to know, and the understanding Christian see what may deserve his praise."

THRONE OF CHARLEMAGNE, AIX-LA-CHAPELLE.

Alcuin lived some eight years after writing the above wise letter of advice to the chief pastor of the Church of England, which lays bare before us the heart of the great English adviser of Charlemagne, and which shows us that the world-famed scholar of whom our church is so proud was a man of God in the word's true sense.

But it does more than this. It tells us what was the spirit which lived in York—Alcuin's home for so many years—in the chief school of theology in England, up to the time when that school, together with all that was noblest and best in the church of our island, was swept away by the ruthless sea-pirates of the north in the days of the fatal Danish invasions.

It was in the memorable year 800 that Charlemagne the Frank reached the summit of earthly power; when at Rome he was saluted emperor by the acclamations of the Pope, the clergy, and the people. The mere title, of course, added nothing to the power wielded by the master of Europe, but the imperial authority and name—the formal acknowledgment by the catholic church, in the person of the bishop of Rome, then generally recognised as the head of western Christendom, of the son of Pépin le Bref as the lawful inheritor of Cæsar's place and rank—threw a glamour round the magnificent court of the mighty Frankish sovereign.

And yet he failed to establish a dynasty. There was a mortal weakness already sapping the strength of his enormous empire, even at the proud moment when he assumed the imperial ensigns at Rome. It has been well said that Charlemagne's hand grasped more sceptres than even that mighty hand could hold. The decay had already begun in the great emperor's lifetime, though perhaps he himself was unconscious of it. It proceeded with fatal rapidity in the days of his son and grandchildren. The empire was divided again and again by his heirs; and the divisions, the deadly feuds and enmities arising from these divisions, the want of all unity and cohesion in the states which arose upon the ruins of the Frankish Empire, were the chief causes which aided the progress of the Northern sea-pirates on the continent of Europe—those same sea-pirates whose work of ruin in England we are about to chronicle. Indeed, to understand the causes of their strange and fatal success in our island, it is absolutely necessary to have some knowledge of what in the ninth century was going on upon the Continent.

Charlemagne's Minister of Education had died in 804, after an unexampled career of splendid and successful work. The emperor, his master, survived him ten years; ten years of outward magnificence and boundless power, though the seeds of decay were already at work in the vast realm. The dramatic environments of his entombment were in keeping with the circumstances of his wonderful life and reign. "In the gallery of the basilica of his loved Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) he had erected his marble throne, covered with plates of gold, studded with Greek cameos and astral gems from Nineveh or Babylon. Before that throne were the stairs descending to the sepulchre, which Charlemagne had already dug deep for himself in the holy ground, even when he raised that marble throne. In 814 the huge broad flagstone which covers the vault was heaved up. There they reverently deposited the embalmed corpse, surrounded with ghastly magnificence, sitting erect on his curule chair, clad in his silken robes, ponderous with broidery, pearls, and orphreys; the imperial diadem on his

head, his closed eyelids covered, his face swathed in the dead-clothes, girt with his baldric, the ivory horn slung in his scarf, his good sword Joyeuse by his side, the Gospel Book open on his lap; musk and amber and sweet spices poured around, his golden shield and golden sceptre pendant before him." *

But Charlemagne was no sooner laid in his stately tomb at Aix-la-Chapelle, than the dismemberment of his weighty realm began and the ruin of the Frankish empire slowly set in. His two elder sons died before their father. His third son, known in history as Louis le Débonnaire, succeeded him as emperor. His long and disastrous reign lasted from 814 to 840 (twenty-eight years). In this period the Frankish Empire was divided between his four sons—Lothair, Pépin, Louis le Germanique, and Charles le Chauve—ten times.

In England, cut off from the continent of Europe by the sea barrier which has so often been its friend, the Frankish emperor, supreme in Europe, was only able to exercise an indirect influence. We possess, indeed, but the scantiest of details of any intercourse between the emperor and the princes who at the end of the eighth and in the early years of the ninth century were ruling in our island. In Northumbria, as we have seen, during the greater part of the period of Charlemagne's reign a miserable state of anarchy prevailed, which gradually undermined the still flourishing school of York. We catch sight of kings and claimants of the Northumbrian crown making their way as exiles and suppliants to the Frankish court. Alcuin, in a letter to Offa, the powerful Mercian king, who reigned from 758 to 796, after the murder of king Ethelred by his Northumbrian thanes, obscurely hints at an armed interference in Northumbrian affairs meditated by Charlemagne—warded off through his influential persuasion. "*Nisi ego intercessor essem*" were Alcuin's words.

The sovereign of Mercia—during the last half of the eighth century, when the power of Northumbria was fading, and Wessex was still enfeebled with internal disputes—occupied the principal and most prominent position among English princes. Two distinguished men, Ethelbald and Offa, filled the Mercian throne in this period. They both belonged to the family of that Penda, the famous heathen king who played so distinguished a part in the story of the preceding century. Ethelbald was the son of Alweo, a brother of Penda, and for a time exercised a supremacy over the centre and much of the south of the island. His power was, however, broken by the men of Wessex at the battle of Burford, in 754, and three years later the Mercian king was murdered by his own chieftains. He was succeeded by his kinsman Offa, in 758. Offa was descended from another brother of the great Penda.

Offa's long reign lasted until 794. He seems to have interfered but little with either Northumbria or Wessex, but he was supreme in middle England and Kent, and towards the end of his reign annexed East Anglia to Mercia. The event of his reign by which he is best remembered was the

* Palgrave's "Normandy and England."

huge earthwork he built up between the mouth of the Wye and the Dee, the remains of which still bear the name of "Offa's Dyke." This great barrier marked the boundary between Mercia and the Welsh, the remnant of the ancient British people, whom he drove further west behind the Severn. Another and a different work, which will ever be connected with the name of Offa, was the foundation of the mighty abbey of St. Albans, near the ruins of the old Roman city of Verulamium, on the spot hallowed by the martyrdom of St. Alban. It is a curious fact that one of the most famous and best known of our English abbeys owes its foundation to a prince of the house of Penda, the last Engle defender of the old heathen religion of the Northmen.

This Offa seems to have enjoyed in some measure the friendship of the great Frankish sovereign, who, however, was evidently far from looking upon the Mercian king as his equal. As certainly the most powerful of the English princes of the last half of the eighth century, Charlemagne considered it expedient to enter into correspondence with him, and even asked for the hand of one of his daughters for his son. Offa, however, in return demanded the hand of Charlemagne's daughter for his heir. The great Frank was offended at this request, as it seemed an assertion of equality on the part of the Mercian king, and for a time the relations between Offa and the Franks were of an unfriendly character. Through Alcuin's influence the two sovereigns were again reconciled There is no doubt that Charlemagne at one period meditated securing a supremacy in England, and hoped that our island would eventually become a province of his vast empire.

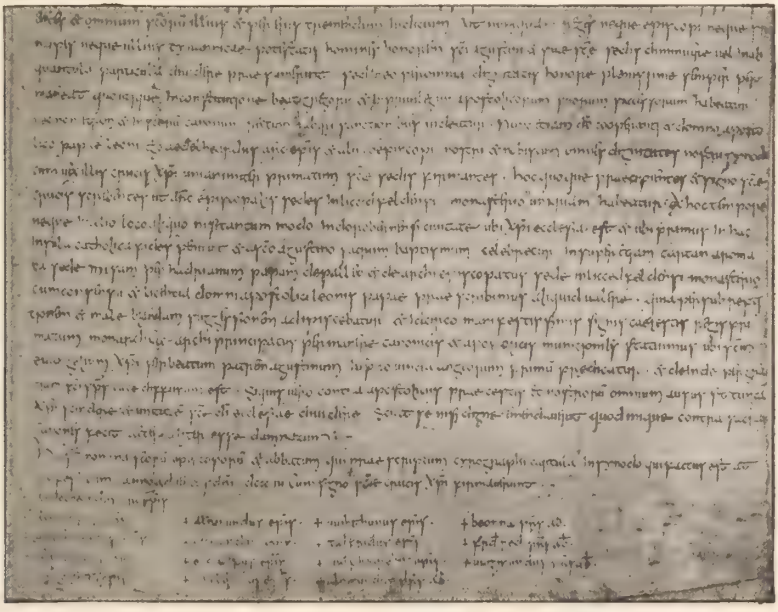
But to the student of English church history the most curious of the interferences of Charlemagne in England was connected with a strange and secret application of Jaenbert, archbishop of Canterbury (766 to 790), for his assistance and countenance. The transaction is interesting, and throws considerable light upon the position of the church in England in the last quarter of the eighth century.

Archbishop Theodore, the first organiser of the Church of England, died in 690, and between that year and the accession of Jaenbert, the prelate who applied to Charlemagne for assistance—a period of some seventy-six years—five archbishops had sat in the seat of Augustine at Canterbury; not men of distinguished ability, but good, earnest bishops, and two or three of them prominent scholars. The position of the early archbishops of Canterbury was a very high one. They were not only the acknowledged primates of the church in England, but were possessors of large estates in Kent and Mercia. Owing to the kings or sub-kings of Kent having transferred their royal residence to Reculvers, the power of the archbishops in Canterbury, the chief city in Kent, was virtually uncontrolled. They coined money in their own name, and their effigy was impressed upon it. Over malefactors arrested upon their own broad estates they had the power of life and death. Some of them, at least, assumed an almost royal state.

In the year 774, after the battle of

Otford, the ancient royal family of Kent became extinct, and Offa, the Mercian king, assumed the royal authority in Kent. But Jaenbert, with the example of the Bishop of Rome before his eyes—the Bishop of Rome had lately, with the consent of the all-powerful Frankish sovereign, assumed himself upon the archbishop, determined to wreck the power of the metropolitan by the erection of a new archbishopric in Mercia, which should have its seat in Lichfield.

The bishops and the public assembly of the Witenagemot agreed to carry out king



PORTION OF A MS. COPY OF THE CLOVESHOE CANON, A.D. 803, BY WHICH THE SUPREMACY OF CANTERBURY OVER LICHFIELD WAS ESTABLISHED (*p.* 331).

the position of a sovereign prince—considered that the archbishop of Canterbury, the pontiff, as he was called, of England, was the natural successor to the vacant Kentish throne. It seems that Jaenbert made his wishes known to Charlemagne, expressing his willingness to exercise sovereign authority in Kent as the feudatory of Charlemagne. The great Frank, however, declined the overtures of archbishop Jaenbert. But Offa of Mercia became aware of Jaenbert's intrigue, and not wishing, for state reasons, openly to revenge Offa's wishes, and the Mercian king, determining that the Mercian archbishop should hold equal rank with the arch-prelates of Canterbury and York, asked the sanction of the bishop of Rome, as the acknowledged head of the western church, to the new arrangement, requesting him to invest the newly-elected archbishop of Lichfield with the sacred pallium. The reigning bishop or Pope of Rome was Hadrian, a distinguished statesman, prelate, and the intimate friend of Charlemagne. Hadrian saw in Offa's request an opportunity for advancing

the ever-growing claim of Rome to supreme power in the western church, and suggested that if he sent the coveted pallium to Lichfield, king Offa should hold a council which should make fresh rules for the Church of England thus re-arranged into three archbishoprics, and that at the council so summoned two legates from Rome should appear. To this Offa consented. It was the price of the Lichfield pallium.

King Offa held the promised synod—for that is what the council really was—at Cealchythe, or Calcuith, which some suppose to have been in Kent (Lingard suggests Chelsea, near London, as the spot). The Roman legates were present. Subsequent to the synod a formal Gemot was held, and then the decisions of the synod were ratified ; and the ancient province of Canterbury was divided as Offa desired. Jaenbert of Canterbury was compelled to release from their oath of canonical obedience to him all his suffragans, save the bishops of Rochester, London, Selsey, Winchester, and Sherburn. The estates and property of the archbishops of Canterbury in the kingdom of Mercia had been previously confiscated, and were used as an endowment for the new arch-see of Lichfield in Mercia.

Among the canons of Cealchythe proposed by the Roman legates, was a curious one dealing with the diet and apparel of monks and nuns. Evidently Rome dreaded the secular and worldly spirit which was then rapidly invading the monastic citadels of the church. The vowed servants of God in their apparel were to avoid "the dyed colours of India and precious garments." This canon appears to have been specially directed against the nunneries, where these not unnatural feminine tastes were thought to be becoming a real danger. Rules respecting the Holy Communion, enforcing greater reverence, were also made. The faithful were to offer *bread*, not *crusts*, for the Holy Feast, and no chalice then used was to be made of *horn*.

Strangely enough, the important work of this early and seemingly momentous synod of Cealchythe, held at the close of the eighth century, came to nothing. The hopes of Rome were disappointed. The presence and overpowering influence of the Italian legates at the synod became no precedent for future synods or councils in England. There is no record of any legate from the Pope taking part in the proceedings of the church during the subsequent Anglo-Saxon period. Even the archbishopric of Lichfield, with the bishops of Mercia and East Anglia for its suffragans, from which Offa in his dream for the advancement of Mercia hoped so much, only lasted a very little while. Founded in 786, it only endured some sixteen years. Offa, the powerful Mercian sovereign, died in 796. Then followed a period in which the grandeur of Mercia, built up in the long reigns of the great kings Ethelbald and Offa, gradually faded, and Cenwulf, who sat on the Mercian throne from Offa's death to 821, was glad, on the occasion of a revolt in Kent against the Mercian supremacy, to recognise the assistance of Ethelhard, who succeeded Jaenbert as archbishop of Canterbury, by the sacrifice of the Mercian arch-see. As early as 799*

* The charter on page 309, witnessed by him, is of date 793–796.

Higbert, archbishop of Lichfield, ceased to sign documents with the title of archbishop, and in the year 803, at the synod of Cloveshoe, the Lichfield archbishopric was swept away, and the ancient glory of the splendour and power of the prelates at Canterbury were restored.

Nearly eleven centuries have passed since the decrees of Cloveshoe in 803, and no attempt has been ever made again to touch the undoubted primacy of the see of Augustine in England. The words of the Cloveshoe canon, which confirmed the primacy to Canterbury, are remarkable :—"We give this a charge, and sign it with the sign of the cross, that the see archiepiscopal from this time forward never be in the monastery of Lichfield, nor in any other place but the city of Canterbury, where Christ's Church is, and where the Catholic faith first shone forth in this island, and where holy baptism was first celebrated by St. Augustine. . . . But if any dare to rend Christ's garment and to divide the unity of the holy Church of God, contrary to the apostolical precepts and all ours, let him know that he is eternally damned, unless he make due satisfaction for what he has wickedly done, contrary to the canons."

The position of the archbishops of Canterbury, the unbroken line of archprelates stretching over thirteen centuries —the quiet, noiseless but undoubted supremacy they have ever exercised (with the solitary brief exception in the case of Lichfield, above related) over the Church of England—has been a most important factor in the power and influence of the church of the Anglo-Saxon race. With the solitary exception of the see of Rome, which for a yet longer period, from various causes, has held a unique place in the Catholic church, Canterbury stands alone among the great sees of the Christian world. We look in vain through all the countries of the world for anything like it. Germany, extending from the shores of the North Sea and the Baltic, far to the south in those lands where the Danube broadens out into an Eastern river ; France, from the sandy flats of Holland to the Mediterranean coasts ; Spain, from the Pyrenees to the Atlantic Ocean in the far west—all these possess many arch-sees of high distinction and power, with a splendid history of their own stretching over centuries ; but in none of these great Christian countries is there anything like Canterbury. The student would be puzzled to say to which of the more prominent Teuton sees he would assign the pre-eminence : Cologne, Mainz, Bamberg, Ratisbon, Vienna, and other names would pass before him in a long and stately procession. In France, such sees as Paris, Rouen, Lyons, and Arles would bewilder him if he attempted the task of assigning the position of primacy to any one of them. Toledo and Seville in Spain have been of equal dignity and power. But in the Church of England Canterbury holds now, as it ever has done from the days of Theodore, a unique position as the mother church, the metropolitan church of the Anglo-Saxon peoples; not only in Britain, but in the far more extensive Britain beyond the seas—a Britain unknown and undreamed of when Augustine first taught the Jutish king, Ethelbert, the story of the Christ, or when Theodore a century later moulded the great Church of the Anglo-Saxon race.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COMING OF THE DANES.

Common Origin of Danes and Engles—Vikings and their Ships—The Viking Thirst for Blood—His Domestic Virtues—The First Viking Raids in England—Larger Invasion of Ireland—Attacks on the Frankish Empire—Influence of the Church upon the Defence of England—The Danes Deliberate and Inveterate Foes of Christianity—Their Growing Power and Invasions, and Terrible Barbarities—Ethelwulf's Visit to Rome and France—Largest Continental Cities Sacked and Burnt—The Danish Storm Bursts over England—Reasons for England's Previous Immunity—The Danes Conquer Northumbria—Destruction of Christianity in the North—Further Conquests—Ragnar Lodbrok and his Sons—His Death Song as Illustrative of the Viking Spirit—The Danish Revenge—Present Traces of the Danish Conquest—Final Attack on Wessex, and Resistance of King Ethelred—Ethelred's Death, and Accession of Alfred.

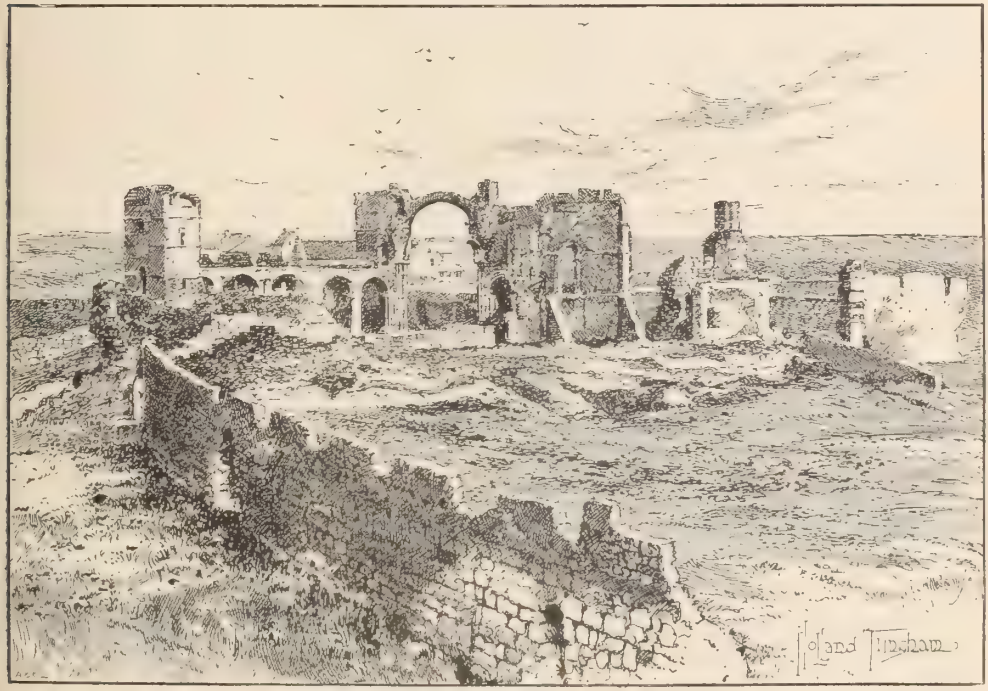
WE must now dwell a little upon those strange fierce raids, upon those expeditions of Danish freebooters, which terrorised—and with good reason—England and northern Europe for more than a hundred years. For good or for evil, they have left their stern mark upon the history of England and France. Without some knowledge of the Danish invasions and of the awful ruin which these invasions brought upon both church and people, it would be utterly impossible to attain to any real understanding of the story of England and of her Church in this period. Who were those sea-robbers, who, with their desolating raids and ever-recurring invasions, so nearly succeeded in effacing all Christian life, with its marvellous civilising results, in England and on the continent of Europe? What is their story?

They also were a Scandinavian race, whose home, whose life, whose language and customs were really the same as the home and language and customs of the Engles; although, perhaps, many of their pirate-ships were manned from farms and homesteads considerably to the north of the districts lying along the North Sea and the Baltic, whence came most of the first conquerors of Britain. Our own English chronicles speak of them generally as *Danes*, which term we shall generally use. On the continent of Europe they were usually called "Northmen." Asser, the biographer of Alfred, uses the words in the same sense, "Northmen or Danes." After the middle of the ninth century the Danes from Denmark appear, however, to have been the principal sharers in the sea-raids which harassed England and the great river-roads of Germany and France.

The question has been frequently asked, What specially *attracted* these peoples southward at this particular juncture—the close of the eighth century? Various reasons have been suggested, for we possess no formal history of the north at this period. It seems probable, at least, that the narrow limits in Jutland, Denmark, and in the countries lying yet further northward, of arable land capable of supporting life, had gradually become insufficient for the needs of an ever-growing population. Some of the first wanderers from their old

home would return, and would bring back news of the undreamed-of riches and luxury enjoyed by peoples dwelling to the south. The hope of plunder would attract more and ever more wanderers. The report that these riches could be easily

people has been well instanced since, from the memories of the Spain of Charles the Fifth, and the England of Elizabeth."* But we shall see presently, when we come to consider the organised later development of this terrible northern invasion, that



RUINS OF LINDISFARNE PRIORY, HOLY ISLAND. *Photo: Poulton, London.*

won, suggested organised expeditions, and so the earlier freebooting expeditions on a larger scale were gathered together.

The story of the "genesis" of the raids is thus fairly accounted for. In seeking for the causes of the earlier Danish freebooting expeditions, the hope of plunder must stand in the forefront. The discovery of the wealth of the dwellers in southern countries was a revelation to these Northmen. "The spell which such disclosure of a world's wealth cast on a whole

the mere hope of plunder was by no means the whole of the story.

There was found, not long ago, in a Norway mound one of the old Danish pirate-ships. It was a large, long vessel—seventy-eight feet long by sixteen feet broad, and some five or six feet deep. Such a "long-ship" drew only four feet of water. She was driven by large red-brown sails and by oars—sixteen oars on either side.

* Green: "Conquest of England."

These pirate-ships sailed in companies. The first expedition of which any record is kept appeared in the year 787 on the West Saxon shores in the south of England, and consisted only of three vessels, while other pirate fleets somewhat later numbered as many as two hundred or more of these long-ships. They were built exclusively for speed, and, with their light draught of water, were able to penetrate far up each river-road, into the very heart of the country they wished to plunder. Only comparatively short voyages could be undertaken, for there was little accommodation in the "long-ships" for crew or stores; but as far as England was concerned no long voyage was necessary, for in about forty hours the sea-pirates could sail and row from Norway to the Shetlands and Orkneys. From these islands Scotland was easily reached, and from the islands of west Scotland the coasts of Ireland were visible—Ireland, with its mighty unprotected monasteries and their undreamed-of treasures. Or from Denmark an easy sail brought the sea-pirates to the mouth of the Elbe; a little voyage along the Frisian shores, and the broad estuary of the Rhine and the Meuse was reached; and farther along the same coast the mouth of the Seine. The Elbe, the Rhine, and the Seine were noble river-roads which led into the very heart of Germany and France. The white cliffs of southern England seemed to beckon these restless ocean freebooters as they coasted along from the Rhine estuary to the Seine, and the broad Thames offered a succession of safe harbours for the largest fleet of pirate long-ships; while to the north the Humber, the Tees, and the Esk were waterways leading to the heart of the northern districts of our island. Long voyages were unnecessary save for a few rare and distant expeditions.

The popular name given to these dread northern pirates—Vikings—Men of the Creek or the Bay—is derived from the Danish word "vik" or "wik," which signifies a bay or creek. There these "long-ships" were often moored, while their fierce crews did their dread work among the inland villages and towns in the neighbourhood of the sea, or at some monastery built in a lonely spot amidst moors or fens by monk-builders who never dreamed of these restless robbers, sprung as it were from the northern seas; of whose very existence, till they paid their awful visits, burning and sacking their loved abodes, they had no conception.

These Vikings—these Danish sea-robbers—were always, however, something more than mere plunderers. An absolute thirst for blood, a strange delight in inflicting the cruellest suffering on their fellow-men; a passion for destroying, as it seemed, for the mere savage pleasure of destruction, was a characteristic feature of these enemies of the human race. In the war-sagas and death-songs of the Vikings which have come down to us, every now and then the song-man seems positively drunken with blood. Ruin and desolation marked the dread track, when the crews of the "long-ship" had landed. Villages and happy homesteads were burnt; the fairest monasteries were sacked and destroyed; the work of patient scholars was ruined in an hour; the fields the monks had reclaimed and tilled with so much care and pains, were ravaged and desolated. The most

cruel tortures were pitilessly inflicted on the unoffending dwellers, alike in the farm and in the monastery. To take but one notable instance: at Paris, in one of the raids up the river Seine, these fiends impaled one hundred and eleven captives, and crucified many others, recklessly slaying at they marched through the beautiful and richly cultivated Normandy and the Isle of France.

And yet these fierce foes, who carried fire and sword through our England and the fairest countries of the continent of Europe; the very men who slew the monk-scholar working in his cell or praying before his altar, who dragged the women into cruel slavery, and tossed little children with ruthless fury from spear to spear, in their own northern homes seem to have been positively gentle and devoted. Nowhere did stronger ties bind husband to wife, or child to father; nowhere was there a deeper reverence for womanhood and the sanctities of womanhood. Their love for their stern inhospitable northern home is proverbial; a touching scene, for instance, occurs in the Njal's saga. Gunnar, a Viking doomed to exile, goes down to the ship. Then he turned with his face up towards the Lythe and the homestead, and said: "Fair is the Lythe, so fair that it has never seemed to me so fair; the corn-fields are white to harvest, and the home mead is mown; and now I will ride back home and not fare to sea at all."* We can hardly believe that such expressions of feeling, such home-love, such a code of morals, belonged to savage war-chiefs, so long the bitter curse of England and the neighbouring countries on the continent.

* Quoted by Green: "Conquest of England."

The first appearance of a Viking ship on the English coast was long preserved as a memorable tradition by the people who afterwards suffered such grievous calamities from the crews of these ships with the dark red sails. It was, as we have said, in 787 that these terrible strangers landed, somewhere on the West Saxon shores. Offa was reigning in Mercia, and Beorthric, who had driven Egbert to his exile with Charlemagne, was king in Wessex. The king's reeve, or chief magistrate in Dorchester, heard of their landing, and at once rode to the coast to inquire what was their business in England. The unfortunate royal official too soon received the answer to his question, for we hear how the fierce strangers killed the reeve and his officers. Nothing more is known of the fate of this first party of Vikings. They probably, after the murder of the reeve, laded their ships with plunder and sailed away.

Six years later, in 793, England was appalled at the tidings which went through the land, that Lindisfarne and the holy shrines of the sainted Aidan and Cuthbert had been sacked, and the monks murdered, and many villages on the Northumbrian coast plundered. In the very next year the dread news gradually spread through England that the long black ships had sailed up the Wear, and had burned the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, the noble foundation of Benedict Biscop, the home of Bede and his famous school.

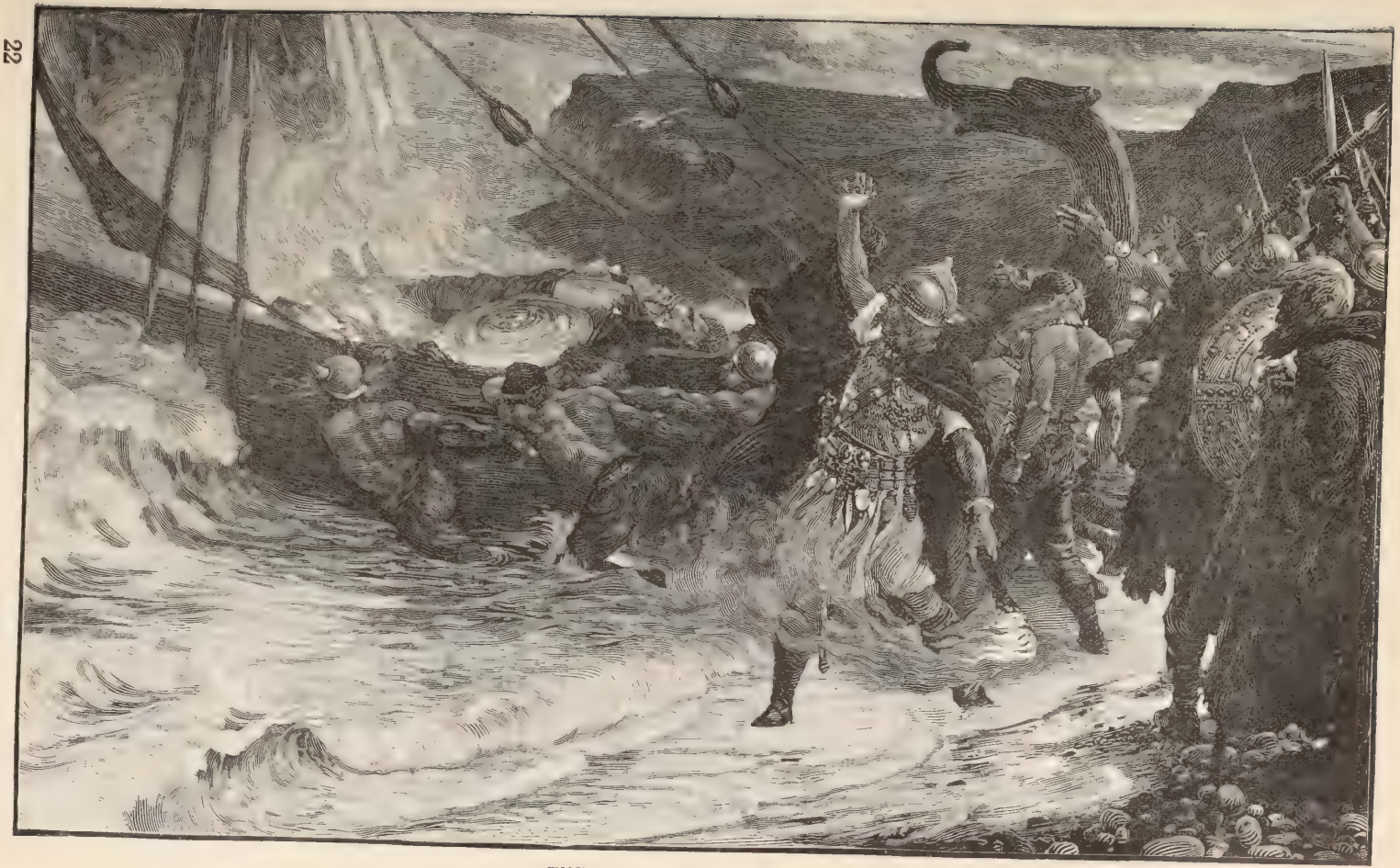
But these were mere small detachments of the mighty plundering fleet of Northmen. The pioneers of the Vikings—little squadrons of two or three ships like the one which appeared on the Wessex coast in the year 787, and which excited the ill-starred

curiosity of the royal reeve of Dorchester —had already reported at home that Ireland offered the most promising scene for plundering operations on a great scale. In Ireland there were numerous religious houses of great extent, inhabited by Christian monks and nuns, absolutely defenceless—houses containing vast treasures of gold and silver and precious things. So to Ireland the earliest raids were made by the Vikings in any really overpowering numbers.

The first appearance and landing of the Northmen in Ireland seems to have been in the year 795, when a place called Reckru was burned, and its shrines destroyed and plundered; but from that year forward Ireland was the scene of numberless Viking raids. It will never be known what treasures of a wonderful but almost forgotten age perished in the thirty years which followed the first landing of the Northmen. It must be remembered how for more than three centuries (Columba was born in 521, and the great Irish monasteries were in existence and in full working order before Columba's days) Ireland had been the famous home of learning, and in her countless monasteries were stored up the treasures which the learning and the patient industry of several centuries had gathered. Her shrines were enriched with gold and gems. Her libraries, filled with precious and costly manuscripts, curiously wrought chalices and sacred vessels, mass-books and copies of the holy books sumptuously bound, the crozier, the pastoral staff, the mitre encrusted with gold and gems, vestments richly and cunningly embroidered, from the treasure chamber of many a monastery, were ruthlessly plundered or destroyed. Nowhere did the Vikings find so much booty; and nowhere, perhaps, so little resistance.

In 832 these detached plundering raids were succeeded by an organised invasion, and a Viking chief named Thorgil established himself in Armagh, and exacted tribute from the whole of the north of Ireland. From this time Ireland became, as it were, a centre whence issued bands of these wild depredators, who ravaged at their will the western coasts of Britain. Egbert, the West Saxon king, the over-lord of England, who died in 836, we read, defeated these Vikings from Ireland in a pitched battle on the boundaries of Cornwall, and for the last years of his reign won rest for the Wessex division of his great kingdom; but their fatal invasions soon recommenced.

Ireland, however, was only one of the many scenes of these fatal Danish raids. Alcuin, the minister and friend of Charlemagne, whose words of bitter sorrow when he heard of the sack of the monasteries of Wearmont and Jarrow in the year 794 have already been quoted, no doubt spoke often with his great master of this new and terrible peril which menaced the north of the vast Frankish empire. The Northmen's depredations on the continent of Europe in various places had begun as early as the year 800. In 803 a formidable attack along the Elbe was only repelled by the advance of a Frankish army. In 810, two hundred Viking ships made a descent on Frisia, and the sea-king in command — Godfrid — boasted he would storm the emperor's favourite city of Aix-la-Chapelle; but internal dissensions among



THE FUNERAL OF A VIKING.

(By permission from the picture by Frank Dicksee, R.A.)

the Norsemen put an end to Godfrid's bold plans. The far-seeing Frankish emperor then made great efforts to protect his northern cities. He built ships and established garrisons; and while he lived, his strong arm seems to have effectually kept the Danish plunderers in check. But in spite of all his forethought, the long-ships with the dark red sails were no uncommon sign, even in the far south. There is a story told of Charlemagne, shortly before his death in 814, that when at Narbonne one day, at table, he was told that some of the pirate ships were in sight. He rose and gazed at them, and as he looked they say the great emperor wept. "I have no fear," he said to the bystanders, "that these dreaded pirates will ever injure me or mine; but I weep that they should dare, even in my lifetime, to come near my coasts, and I foresee the misery they will surely bring on those who come after me."

Charlemagne's forebodings were only too quickly realised. The story of the reign of his son and successor, Louis le Débonnaire, is a story of disaster; of dissensions within, and of continuous wars without. The vast realm of the Franks, ruled over by the great emperor, was surrounded by a ring of enemies who pressed it hard on every side. The varied nationalities of which it was composed, in Italy, Germany, Holland, France, had no feeling of deep loyalty to the reigning Frankish emperor. The empire, divided and weakened, opposed no effectual barrier to the ever recurring invasion and raids of the Northmen.

In England, in this disastrous period, the most remarkable feature was the position occupied by the church. Although the strong arm and conspicuous military genius of Egbert of Wessex, the over-lord of England, was able successfully to repel the Vikings, and generally to preserve his dominions from the ruin and destruction which followed in the track of the dreaded pirate bands, like Charlemagne — with whom he had spent so many years during his long exile—he was too far-seeing a statesman to make light of these new foes to Christianity and civilisation. Like the Frankish emperor, he saw plainly that the Viking invasions were only beginning; that they would, as time went on, gather fresh force, would become better organised, more united, would probably fall on cultured and wealthy countries like England with an irresistible power. Egbert and his advisers knew what had happened to the hapless Northumbrian monasteries of Lindisfarne and Jarrow and Wearmouth in the closing years of the last century. They had watched with dread and horror what these Northmen had lately done in Ireland, and how a large portion of that great island, with its priceless treasures, was literally at the mercy of these heathen sea-robbers. It was this pressing, this immediate danger which determined the English king to draw the Church of England into a closer and more intimate union with the State than had ever existed before.

Egbert, trained by Charlemagne, recognised the power of an organised and united church, and felt that he possessed in the Church of England a great national community which rose above the petty jealousies of Mercia, Northumbria, and

Wessex. So in the year 838 the king and over-lord promised lasting protection and peace to the see of Canterbury ; and archbishop Ceolnoth, on his part, gave Egbert a pledge of firm friendship and loyalty. With the bishop of Winchester, the chief prelate of Wessex, similar undertakings were entered into ; and probably other important sees joined in these mutual pledges of a firm and loyal union. This intimate union between church and state was equally welcome to the prelates, who guided the fortunes of the church, as to Egbert the king. For the church felt its very existence was in the gravest peril from the determined attacks of the pagan Northmen, the bitter foes of all who bore the name of Christ.

This special aspect of the Viking wars has perhaps been a little lost sight of. We are in the habit of regarding these bitter foes to civilisation as mere robbers, whose one great object was plunder ; whose only thought was how they could attack and rifle defenceless monasteries and nunneries, prosperous villages and towns, farms and homesteads, wealthy abbeys and famous churches, and stripping these of all things of apparent value, sail away with their plunder to their own northern homes beyond the sea. In reality, the burning of the house of prayer, of the homestead or the village, the ruthless harrying and devastation of the country, were rather incidents in those invasions ; simply careless, thoughtless actions of cruel warriors, accustomed to and even finding a savage delight in scenes of rapine, of blood and suffering. The Vikings, Northmen, sea-kings, Danes, Ostmen, by whatever name they are known ; the burners of Lindisfarne and Jarrow, the ruthless plunderers of the great Celtic monasteries in Ireland ; the men who harried East Anglia, and then, under their sea-king Ivar, desolated Northumbria with fire and sword—were ever the constant, the determined, the relentless *enemies of Christianity*. It would seem as though, in the long-drawn-out bitter onslaught of these fierce Northmen, Paganism made its last desperate attack on Christianity ; and at one time it appeared as though the old false gods of the north would be the victors, and in England and in many of the fairest countries of the continent of Europe would succeed in supplanting Christ.

A notable instance of the intense hatred of the Viking to the religion of Christ occurred in this century, in the year 855. Eric the Red, a famous sea-king, was acknowledged as over-lord of Denmark. The emperor Charlemagne, among the chief fortress-defences of the north, had built Hamburg. It rapidly became a great centre in the north, at once a fortress and a monastery ; the city an archiepiscopal see. It was stormed and sacked by Eric, the Viking chieftain, and Anscharius, the archbishop, fled for his life. Anscharius subsequently returned to Hamburg. He was a man of rare nobility and devotion, and as his revenge for the injuries done him by the Danes, he spent his revenues in redeeming captive Danish children, and educating them in Christian practice and doctrine. He succeeded in winning the Viking Eric's heart, and his once persecutor became his protector and friend. King Eric never seems to have professed Christianity, but, won over by the goodness of the archbishop, he

became much more kindly disposed towards the religion so bitterly hated by his Danish subjects. Simply by this kindness to Anscharius and the Christians of Hamburg, Eric stirred up the most inveterate hatred of the Northmen. Sea-pirates from all parts gathered together, choosing even to forego their voyages in pursuit of plunder, rather than not share in the act of vengeance and punishment. The Norsemen's gods, the laws, the spirit of the whole Viking world, had received at the hands of Eric the Red, king of Denmark, the hated Christian's friend and protector, a deadly injury. It was insupportable that the chief Northman king should show any kindness to, or friendship for, the Christianity which they had sworn to destroy.

Eric assembled his numerous dependents, and the armies met in deadly combat at Flensburg, in the Jutland country. For three days the battle raged fiercely. Eric fell, and the chiefs of the insurgent Viking army, who wished to revenge the insult offered by Eric's friendship for the Christian to the gods of the Viking, Odin and Thor, perished likewise, with a host of minor sea-kings and jarls. As the news of that bloody Flensburg fight was noised in the countries harried by the Norsemen, men hoped that the power of the dreaded sea-rovers was broken by the terrible slaughter in that strange fight among themselves; but if Flensburg did give the hapless countries any respite from the swift, recurring raids, the respite was but of brief duration.

BRONZE SEAL OF ETHILWALD, BISHOP OF DUNWICH (*circa* A.D. 850).

GOLD RING OF ETHELWULF.

Egbert of Wessex, the over-lord of England, Charlemagne's friend, died in 839, and then began the real struggle between the Danes and the Englishmen. Ethelwulf, the son of Egbert, succeeded to the Wessex throne, and to the nominal— for it was little more—overlordship of Mercia and Northumberland.

Meanwhile the power of the Vikings in Ireland—Ostmen was the name they were mostly called there—grew rapidly. Ulster passed well-nigh entirely under their rule, and the rest of the island was threatened by the invaders. Making use now of Ireland as the basis of their operations, several formidable expeditions were undertaken with varying success against Wessex and the south-west of England. Each invasion, although generally repelled with great loss to the Northmen, brought untold misery and suffering upon the hapless districts through which the pirates passed. Wessex, indeed, ever offered a stout resistance to the foe, and owing to this persistent and gallant defence, Wessex—including the western and southern portion of the island—never became Danish.

The Viking, often though he harried Wessex, was never able to settle permanently in any part of what are now the southern and western counties of England. It was in the east of England, the part of the island most exposed to the Viking raids, and, owing to its political circumstances, least able to defend itself, that the real danger lay. It was, as we shall see, from the Danish settlement in East Anglia that the army of Vikings came which ruined the north of England, and finally swept away the splendid civilisation which the church, after two centuries of patient toil, had slowly built up.

We possess no details of the pirate raids in the east and south-east of England. We catch sight of passing descents of the Northmen in East Anglia and in districts north of the Wash, in A.D. 838. But these ruinous expeditions were no doubt of yearly occurrence, though they are mostly unchronicled. But in the year 851 they seem to have landed in force, and to have sacked the cities of Canterbury, with its famous monastery and schools, and London, which, owing to its unrivalled situation, was slowly growing into importance. We read of as many as 350 ships and their armed crews taking part in this fatal expedition. After

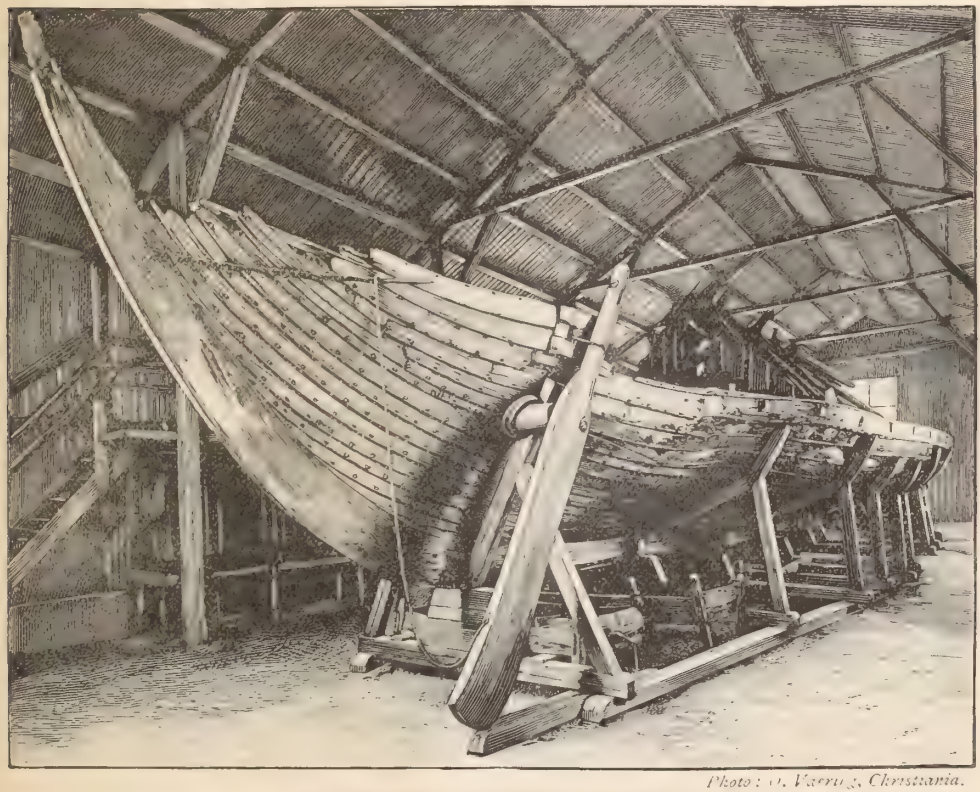


Photo: O. Vaering, Christiania.

OLD VIKING SHIP DISINTERRED AT GOKSTAD.

these deeds of destruction, however, they sustained a severe check at the hands of king Ethelwulf, who defeated the plundering hosts with great slaughter at Aclea. But this check was only temporary, for in 854–5 we find a great force of sea-pirates positively wintering in the Isle of Sheppey.

The danger now seemed so pressing, with the band of the Vikings apparently numberless, and increasing in boldness and daring every year, that king Ethelwulf determined upon a pilgrimage to Rome and a visit to the grandson of the great Charlemagne, Charles the Bald (le Chauve) who was reigning over that portion of the vast Frankish empire which generally corresponds with what we know as France. King Ethelwulf's journey took place in 854. It had a double object. Christian England feared, and with reason, for its very existence. A ring of fierce pagan warriors was gradually forming round the apparently doomed island. Ireland to the west was virtually in the hands of the Vikings. The opposite coasts of Frisia and Gaul were fast becoming settlements of the same pagan conquerors ; fresh, and ever fresh bands of the same enemies of Christianity and civilisation, seemed to be ever arriving from the north. No sooner was one Viking force met and defeated, than another fleet and army succeeded them. The sacking and plundering of Canterbury and London were terrible warnings of a fate which too probably awaited the cities and monasteries of the northern and central districts. The visit to Rome was to implore, in the most sacred shrine in Christendom, the interposition of the Most High in defence of the church which seemed about to perish ; was to take counsel with the chief Christian prelate of the west, invested, as the Church of England held, with a peculiar sanctity, in this day of danger and awful peril. The visit to king Charles the Bald, on his journey home, was to take mutual counsel how best to avert the deadly peril which menaced the very existence of the realms and the religion alike of the Anglo-Saxon and of the Frankish kings.

Ethelwulf spent a year at Rome, and three months with Charles the Bald. Although advanced in years, before he closed his visit he married Judith, the young daughter of Charles. This somewhat strange marriage gave great umbrage to many in England, and shortly afterwards we find king Ethelwulf relegated to the position of under-king of Essex and the eastern portion of the realm, while Ethelbald, the king's eldest son, was placed by the Witan on the throne of Wessex.

We spoke of the iron ring with which the pagan Vikings were gradually girdling England. A large portion of Ireland served as a permanent garrison of Vikings, whence at their pleasure they could sail over to neighbouring England with a large or small squadron of the dreaded long-ships, according to the nature of the raid or invasion they had planned. But on the east and south of England the danger from the Northmen pirates was far greater, when the strong and far-reaching arm of Charlemagne was once removed. The great emperor died in 814. The Northmen of Norway, Denmark, and Jutland and the Isles, who had been threatening the northern coasts of the Frankish empire for some years, were soon conscious

that the one foeman whom they feared, and who had succeeded in keeping them fairly in check, was removed, and that the imperial sceptre was in different and weaker hands.

Louis the Pious—generally known in history as Louis le Débonnaire—was fully alive to the dangers which threatened his empire from the north, and continued and even increased the garrison and frontier defences, and for a time prevented the pirates from penetrating up the rivers into the interior. He endeavoured to Christianise some of these formidable pagans, and thus to win some of them to the side of law and order and peace. With rare exceptions, his efforts to convert the Northmen ended in failure. When Christianity was accepted by a Viking chief, it was usually the result of a bribe, large or small. On one occasion it is related how a Viking, angry at the absence of the usual presents made at the baptising ceremony to the converts, said, "This is the twentieth time that I have come to be washed; I have always received the best white robes. If I can have no better robe than this, I disclaim your Christianity." At all events, no real impression was made till a much later date on these stubborn pagans. Towards the end of Louis' reign the attacks on the northern coast grew more and more numerous, and the defence less successful. The Northmen ravaged the Belgic coast, and sacked the wealthy commercial city of Doerstadt, in which great centre alone fifty-four churches were destroyed by them. The political circumstances of the empire, too, favoured their attacks. Internal dissensions and family feuds distracted the Frankish power, and Louis the Pious was utterly unable to control his sons, or his subjects belonging to so many nationalities. He died in 840, and France, much as we now understand by that name, fell to the share of his youngest son, Charles the Bald. The great Frankish empire was now split up into several kingdoms, if not positively hostile, at least jealous with a deadly jealousy one of the other. England, outwardly under one over-lord, in reality was divided into three or even more divisions, with different views, hopes, aspirations. Alone the Catholic church in England, as on the continent of Europe, represented unity of aim and purpose in the west, and helped to preserve civilised Europe from its terrible foes.

While England was thus divided against itself, and the varied kingdoms of Europe into which the empire of the Franks had split up, were hopelessly at variance one with the other; jealousies, race divisions, family feuds keeping them apart, and preventing anything like united action against a common foe, a strange "unity seems to have pervaded the achievements of the pirate-warriors, and to have sustained them in all their enterprises until their mission was fulfilled. Whatever may have been their internal dissensions and enmities, they conducted their enterprises as one people, one nation actuated by one spirit, having one object in which they all concurred." Plunder may account for much, but not for all; and as we have already pointed out, it seems most probable that the unifying and central motive was an intense hatred of Christianity, a last and supreme rally of Paganism against the religion of Jesus. At all events,

"henceforth (*i.e.* after 841, death of Louis the Pious) and until their conflagrations were extinguished, Gaul and the British Islands, the North Sea, the Channel, and the Atlantic coasts—nay, even the Mediterranean, may be considered as included in one vast scheme of predatory yet consistent invasion; and their systematic assaults, descents, and expeditions, whether consecutive or simultaneous, accelerated or delayed, almost indicate a grand design of rendering Latin Europe their empire." *

POMMEL OF A DANISH SWORD.
(*Found in the Seine, near Paris. British Museum.*)

The year 841 was memorable among the sad annals of the pirate-raids of this unhappy century, as being the first of the many inland expeditions of the Vikings. Hitherto, the skilful disposition of Charlemagne's garrison, kept up by his son and successor, the emperor Louis the Pious, had restrained the Northmen from sailing up the great river-roads into the interior of Europe. Their depredations had been, in Gaul and Germany, mainly confined to the coasts and their immediate vicinity. But the two emperors, father and son, were gone, and one of the Viking captains, Jarl Osker, a name which will never be forgotten among the bloodstained memories of these scourges of Europe, found out that he could sail into the broad estuary of the Seine and up its deep waterway, reaping a booty hitherto undreamed of, and might strike the Christian Franks of Gaul with a blow up to now unventured. Absolutely unhindered, the Danish fleet of long-ships, aided by sail and oar, worked their swift way up the Seine to the rich and flourishing city of Rouen—a city which had been famous for ages before the Frank had settled in the fair land, under the name of Rothomagus. It was the first of many similar scenes which marked the unhappy years which followed. Three days, undisturbed by any real resistance, Jarl Osker and his crews worked their will on the hapless city—the chief city of all that fertile and wealthy part of Frankish Gaul. They plundered and burnt and destroyed at their pleasure. The cathedral and the churches and the monasteries were, as usual, the special objects of their fury; laden with booty, carrying with them on their ships many captives, before Charles the Bald could make any tardy effort at rescue, they dropped down the broad river, back to their familiar sea, ransacking and desolating as they went some of the wealthy and splendid monasteries on the river banks, such as Jumièges and Fontenelle. Fontenelle is well known in ecclesiastical story as St. Wandregisilias. This far-famed community — seven churches clustered together in these sacred walls—and the monastery, boasted the noblest library of the north. The renowned house was saved from utter ruin by the payment of a ransom; but it was only saved for a brief season.

* Palgrave: "Normandy and England."

Normandy, the province of the Normans or Northmen, which in after years was destined to play so great a part in the story of Europe, and especially of England, dates from the three days' sack of Rouen.

COLLECTING DANE-GELT.

In the following year, A.D. 842, the Vikings, emboldened by the easy voyage of Jarl Osker up the Seine, and by the news which travelled north of the splendid results of the raid, sailed up the river Loire in force, plundering Bordeaux and Nantes, wasting the land and massacring the inhabitants as they went. The Loire and the Seine, and further south the Garonne, henceforth became river-roads well known and often travelled by the long red-sailed pirate-vessels.

But the worst was yet to come. Charles the Bald and his Franks seemed paralysed with fear, seemed utterly unable to offer

any real resistance to their terrible foes, who swiftly came and went up and down these silent river-highways into the heart of his beautiful realm, burning and destroying as they pleased. The year 845 stands out among these fatal seasons as the date of an especially fatal capture. Ragnar Lodbrok, the semi-fabulous hero of saga and legend, but who was a very real person in the annals of unhappy France, with a great pirate fleet, determined to strike a blow far in the interior. Sailing up the Seine past Rouen, he stormed and sacked Paris, and was only induced to withdraw from the scenes of his new conquest by the payment of an enormous ransom. This appears to have been the first formal "Dane-gelt" paid by France; a dreary precedent too often to be repeated in coming years of disaster, in both England and in France.

The year of the occupation and sack of Paris by the Viking, Ragnar Lodbrok, witnessed another great disaster in the far north — the burning and plundering of Hamburg, the chief commercial centre of northern Germany. As many as 600 pirate ships—the number seems incredible —under king Eric the Red, took part in this successful foray. The curious story connected with king Eric the Red's successful exploit, which resulted in the battle of Flensburg, fought out amongst the sea pirates themselves, has already been related in connection with the bitter anti-Christian spirit of the Pagan Northmen. We even hear in these years of Viking raids as far south as Spain, where the distant city of Seville was plundered by these wandering Northern warriors. In 850-851 Jarl Osker and his Viking fleet revisited the scene of their first successful raid in the Seine some ten years before, and for well nigh a year remained in Rouen and its neighbourhood.

Thus, at the commencement of the second half of the ninth century, we find the Northmen pirates virtually the masters of the fairest portions of France. They had command of all the great rivers, each of which served as an open way for their ships into the heart of the country. On the extreme north, the Scheldt led them into what is now termed the Low Countries—Belgium, and the northern frontier of France. Possession of the Seine gave them that great and wealthy district called after them Normandy, allowed them with their fleets free access to Paris and the very heart of France; on the west, the Atlantic sea-board, the waters of the Loire and the Garonne floated up the long-ships and their warrior crews far into the interior of central and southern Gaul. When we remember, too, what England and Ireland were suffering at their hands at the same period, when king Ethelwold, the son of Egbert, was reigning—from 839 to 858—and that in North Germany the Elbe and the Rhine were similarly infested by the Viking plunderers; that far to the south the same sea-robbers, though to a less extent, harried Spain, and even reached Seville; we wonder whence came all these hosts of pirates. The whole male population of barren Norway, and even of Sweden, of the narrow limits of Denmark, Jutland and the islands, would seem scarcely to have sufficed to man these vast and numerous Viking fleets, who were ravaging and plundering over so large a portion of northern and western Europe.

To account for this apparent disparity between the relative extent of the population in the home of the Vikings, and the vast armaments sailing from the barren Norwegian and Danish coast, we must fall back again on the theory already advanced, that the Viking raids as a whole must be considered as "one vast scheme of predatory yet consistent invasion"; that these raids under various sea-chiefs, apparently each fighting for his own hand, were generally part of one great plan, were the deliberate work of one nation, inspired by one spirit. Though plunder and greed rallied not a few daring and reckless spirits to their banners, and enormously increased the numbers of their fighting strength, the Viking leaders — men like Ragnar Lodbrok and Jarl Osker, Ivar and Ubbo, Halfdene and Hasting, and other distinguished chiefs—dreamed of a pagan empire, to be built up on the ruins of the Christian domination, in England and on the continent of Europe.

Perhaps, too, we somewhat exaggerate to ourselves the numbers of these pagan Northmen, who took part in the long, deadly strife. Although the area they infested was very great, their numbers were probably greatly magnified by their marvellous activity, by the rapidity with which they carried out most of their projects. Three days, for instance, were sufficient for Jarl Osker to burn and plunder the great city of Rouen; a few more days sufficed to complete his desolating campaign against the principal monasteries on the banks of the Seine. Now and then we hear of the Vikings making a protracted stay, stretching over several months, in some scene propitious for extended operations. But for the most part they swooped down with awful suddenness, and disappeared as suddenly as they came. Their long series of French raids, which put back all civil and religious progress for at least two generations, have been cleverly compared to "a stage procession, winding in and out disappearing and returning."*

In this awful decade of 850–860, so generally did the fear of the Viking sink into the hearts of the Christian Franks, that a new supplication was formally introduced into the Gallican liturgies; and along with the prayer asking to be delivered from pestilence and apostasy and *eternal* death, rose up the piteous petition, "From the wild rage of the Northmen, good Lord deliver us." In the stately monastery of Généviève, so deeply was the memory of the destruction and desolation inflicted by the raids of Ragnar Lodbrok and his Vikings imprinted on the hearts of the sufferers and their successors in that great home of prayer, that the same petition, "*a furore Normannorum libera nos*," continued to be intoned in the abbey choir up to the times of Louis XIII., in the seventeenth century. It was no exaggeration, no mere bit of rhetoric, when we referred to the iron band which was slowly closing round hapless England in the year 854–5, when king Ethelwulf went on his pilgrimage to Rome to implore the mercy of Almighty God for his doomed realm, and endeavoured to concert some means of mutual defence with his royal brother-sufferer, king Charles the Bald of France.

* See Palgrave, "Normandy and England," for a detailed account of their raids.

Ethelwulf died in comparative retirement as under-king, to which position the will of the Witan, and probably the ambition of his son Ethelbald, had relegated him in the east of England. His girl-wife, Judith, the daughter of Charles the Bald, who was but fourteen years old, probably for mere political reasons was married to Ethelbald ; but such an alliance was, of course, gravely censured by the church, and was quickly dissolved, Judith returning to her father in France. She subsequently married Baldwin (*bras de fer*) Count of Flanders. Ethelbald only retained the throne he coveted for two years after his father's death. Dying in 860, he was succeeded by his brother—Ethelbert—whose short reign, lasting but six years, was uneventful. Only two raids of the Northmen are specially chronicled during these brief reigns: the one on Winchester, the other on the eastern shores of Kent. But Ethelbert was succeeded by another brother—Ethelred —and in the first year of Ethelred's reign, in 866, the storm which his father Ethelwulf had foreseen, broke at length over hapless England.

In that year the state of the Viking "world" was as follows. This formidable nation had passed in the last sixty or seventy years from the position of an unknown and hitherto unheard-of piratical race, whose ships now and again committed isolated depredations on the coast of Ireland, England, and France, to the position of virtual masters of a large portion of northern Europe. They had begun by playing the part of simple sea-pirates, but had gradually settled on the coasts and in the regions they had harried. These settlements of the Northmen had changed the character of many countries. In the year 866 they were masters of the Shetlands and Orkneys and the Hebrides. The east coast of Ireland was theirs, and much of the northern part of the island. From Denmark and Jutland to the river Garonne and the far south of France, the long stretch of coast was absolutely in their power. Far up the broad water-courses of the Scheldt, the Meuse and Rhine, the Seine, the Loire and the Garonne, reached the supremacy of the Northmen. In all these lands, wherever the cloud of the long-ships with the dark red sails and their fierce crews had cast their baleful shadows, the religion of the Crucified had disappeared, and the old pagan worship of Woden and Thor reigned in its place. Ruins of stately desecrated abbeys, wrecked monasteries and nunneries, marked their dreaded passage; and rare was the instance of any pagan Northman, either as a wandering sea-pirate, or later, as an intruding settler, during the sixty or seventy years of piracy and conquest, adopting the religion of the conquered.

This was the great difference between these Northmen, and the races from the north who had preceded them some two centuries before as conquerors. The Frank, the Saxon, and the Engle were soon won over to the religion of the conquered ; in a very short space of time, they became converts to Christianity, even devoted adherents of the religion of the people whose lands they had appropriated. Not so the Vikings; *their* aim apparently was to totally uproot Christianity. The Vikings absolutely *hated* the religion of Jesus. The first object of their destructive

A VIKING CHIEF.

(By permission, from the picture by Carl Haag, R.W.S.)

fury was ever the house of God and the home of prayer; and this not alone because in their sacred enclosures were stored up treasures of all kinds, but because they were the citadels of a religion which they detested.

Singularly enough, it was in England where they had worked least mischief during these seventy years of rapine and conquest. It was in England where they had met with the stoutest and most determined resistance from the men of Wessex. Various causes had led to this obstinate defence. England was colonised, we must remember, by a brave unconquered race of Northmen; kinsmen, indeed, of the Viking pirate clans. These Engles, Saxons, and Jutes belonged to a hardy, fighting race, and, as we have seen, there was little if any admixture among the Anglo-Saxons of any other people; they had exterminated or driven away their predecessors in the island. The Franks, on the other hand, were largely mingled with the older dwellers in the Continental lands they had occupied. The old Roman provincials made up a large portion of the inhabitants of Gaul even after the Frankish occupation. They were by no means the same hard-fighting people as the English of the neighbouring island.

Another and special source of English strength and English unity of action, was *the Church*. In learning and in organisation, as well as in fervid devotion, the Church of England, perhaps, held a unique position in Christian Europe. Its power and influence was borne witness to by one of the last acts of that warrior and statesman, king Egbert, who in 838, conscious how great and beneficial a part the Church of England was playing in his dominion, made a solemn pact with its leading prelates at Canterbury and Winchester. In Northumbria also, torn and divided with rival factions, rival competitors for the throne, the Church was the one power which preserved any semblance of unity in the distracted northern kingdom, and which materially helped to preserve and to strengthen what was left of law and order in that once powerful division of England. The school of York, though sadly weakened by the dissensions which for so many years had rent Northumbria, had continued to be a great home of learning, a centre of religious light and training.

Then again, Wessex, in which great district of England the majority of the earlier Viking descents were made, was a compact territory, well organised for defence, governed from 802 to 839 by a great warrior, king Egbert, and from 839 to 857 by Ethelwulf, his son, who followed closely in his great father's steps. These were the sixty chief years of Viking conquests. But when the "sixty years" had well-nigh run their course, Ethelwulf and Wessex too clearly saw the danger which lay in front of them. Ethelwulf, when he went that pilgrimage to Rome, felt that the power of resistance was almost exhausted. The foe was yearly becoming stronger, and yearly England was becoming less able to resist the increasing pressure.

Nor must it by any means be supposed that, because the resistance of Wessex was of a more determined character than had been generally offered in Ireland and on the Continent, the sufferings which England

had endured at the hands of these pagan pirates were slight. The plundering and burning of Jarrow and Lindisfarne at the close of the eighth century, the sack of Canterbury and London in the reign of Ethelwulf, must not be forgotten, besides the numberless smaller raids, which too surely brought in their trail untold loss and suffering before the depredators were repulsed with hard fighting. Even Ethelwulf's victory at Aclea in 851 was a stubborn and hardly-contested fight, and the winter of 854 witnessed a host of sea-pirates spending several months in the Isle of Sheppey—terrible and dangerous neighbours for the dwellers in Kent and Essex. But in spite of all this, up to the year 866, when Ethelred, the son of Ethelwulf, succeeded his brother Ethelbert on the throne of Wessex, no permanent lodgment had been as yet made in England. The Thames and the Severn, the Humber and the Tyne, were not water-ways open to the incursions of the Vikings, as were the Scheldt and the Elbe, the Seine and the Loire.

The astute chieftains of the northern pirates were well aware of the comparative failure hitherto on the part of the Vikings, in making any real impression upon England. They were conscious that their race had as yet, after some sixty or seventy years of constant warfare, acquired no permanent settlement in the great island, which, situated as it was, so long as it remained outside their sphere of influence, effectually barred them from establishing anything like a great Viking pagan empire in the north of Europe. Ireland, it is true, was already in great measure theirs; but their Irish dominion was separated from their Frankish and German conquests by England, intensely hostile to their policy and, above all, to their religion. "It was the winning of Britain which was needed above all to support and widen their conquests to the eastward and westward of it. Had the pirates ever become masters of this central post, the face of the west must have changed. Backed by a Scandinavian Britain, their isolated colonies along the Irish coast must have widened into a dominion over all Ireland, while their settlement along the Frankish coast might have grown into a territory stretching over much of Gaul. In a word, Christendom would have seen the rising of a power upon its border which might have changed the fortunes of the western world."* In the theory already advanced and discussed, that one of the principal aims of the leaders of the Vikings, was the destruction of Christianity, yet another reason is before us which accounts for the terrible eagerness of the Northmen pirates to make England their own. England and her church in the ninth century was the centre and chief inspirer of the religion they longed to ruin.

The plans and preparations for the great invasion which resulted in such momentous consequences for our English people, were no doubt the fruit of long and anxious consideration on the part of the chiefs who guided the Viking counsels. The whole character of the expedition, the part of the island selected for the operations of the invading force, shows how well the pirate leaders had been informed of the state of England, and with what skill and forethought they had

* Green: "Conquest of England."

profited by their true information. To distract the attention of the defenders of England, a large fleet, numbering two hundred ships, under a Viking captain named Olaf the Fair, sailed up the Firth of Forth, threatening the Northumbrian realm to the north. But the real host of Northmen who were to do the meditated work landed on the East-Anglian coasts. It is probable that many Viking raids had already desolated and utterly dispirited these eastern shores, for the formidable pirate-army were suffered unhindered to pass the winter of A.D. 866 in their armed East Anglian camp.

BRONZE BUCKET FOUND AT HEXHAM WITH 8,000 SMALL COINS, PROBABLY A.D. 867 (*British Museum*).

Warriors were quickly forthcoming for this memorable invasion. Ireland and France and the northern part of Germany had been plundered again and again in the last half century. It would not have been easy to find a wealthy monastery or an abbey church on the river-roads of France unplundered, or at least unransomed; but in England the Vikings knew well there was many a home of prayer, many an abbey church, in which were laid up what in the eyes of these sea-pirates were fabulous treasures, as yet untouched by Viking hand. The prominent part in this fatal invasion of England, was taken by warriors who came for the most part from the country now known as Denmark. This is the first appearance of sea-pirates under their national name. They were of the same race as the Northmen of south Jutland, distinguished in the Frankish raids as the Northmen of Norway, and who under the name of Ost-men, chose Ireland as the scene of their plundering invasions. From henceforth the name of Dane is invariably applied to the invaders in England.

The leader of this army of adventure was Ivar the Boneless, a name not likely to be forgotten by any student of our English past. In some accounts he is called Ingwar. He was of the royal Danish race of the Skiolding, and according to a very general tradition was the son of the famous Viking leader Ragnar Lodbrok, who in the year 844 sailed up the Seine and sacked Paris. In the spring of 867 the armed camp in East Anglia, where Ivar had wintered, was broken up, and, as the chronicle expresses it, "they horsed themselves," and rapidly advanced on the north of England.

The position of affairs in unhappy Northumbria was evidently well known to the Danes. They expected, probably, an easy conquest; for, as was usually the case, the northern kingdom was rent by the claims of two rival competitors for the crown. The over-lordship of Wessex had, since apparently was not strongly fortified. Victory at first declared for the English, who forced their way into the city; but a determined rally of the Viking chief changed completely the fortunes of the day. The Northumbrians were completely routed, and the rival Engle kings, who

A VIKING RAID.

the death of Egbert, been but a shadowy dignity, if it existed at all. The common danger united the hostile Northumbrian princes; but the Danes under Ivar, with their usual celerity of movement, arrived at York before any help arrived. The Northumbrian forces, hastily gathered together, fell upon the Danes, whom they probably outnumbered. The Danes retreated behind the walls of York, which had united against the common foe, were slain.

The possession of York, the death of the kings, and the complete destruction of the English army, completely terrorised the whole kingdom. No further attempt at resistance was made, and Ivar and his pirate Danes found themselves in undisputed possession of the entire country between the Humber and the Forth.

Never in the story of the Northmen was so complete a conquest the result of one short, sharp campaign ; never had so vast a plunder, in all the countless raids of the Vikings, been at the mercy of the Pagan sea-robbers ; never in that bloodstained story which treats of the desolation and ruin of so many countries between the first years of the ninth century and 867, the year of the York rout, do we find such a record of destruction and ruin as in the dry details which we possess of the acts of Ivar and his Danes after the fatal field of York, in the year 867.

The glory of Northumbria had lasted some two centuries. Seventy-four years had passed since the country had been appalled by the tidings of the burning of sacred Lindisfarne, in 793, and in the year following by the bloody raid on Jarrow and Wearmouth. Up to those two terrible years, few in the northern kingdom had even heard of Northman or Ostman, of Dane or pirate Viking. But from that fatal date the terror grew, and with good reason. Every merchant ship, every traveller, as year followed year, brought tidings of their ravages in the broad realms of the northern Franks and in Ireland. England had suffered less during this weary age of "the coming of the Vikings," but even England in many parts, particularly in East Anglia, was sorely harried. All this uneasiness, dread of what was coming—a too well-founded dread, as it turned out—weakened gradually the vigorous, intellectual life of the Northumbrians ; but it was far from being destroyed, and when Ivar and the Danes occupied York and routed the Northumbrian kings beneath the walls of the historic capital of the north of England, the school of York was still a flourishing home of religious and secular learning.

But the Dane lost no time in carrying out his long-formed schemes for the ruin of Christianity. The rank and file among the Viking army of conquerors, in the plunder of the northern religious houses, were able to satisfy that lust of plunder which had rallied them to the standard of the pirate leader Ivar ; while the chiefs of the same host saw the great object of the invasion fulfilled, in the sack and utter destruction of these Christian centres. Not a single monastic establishment was left in Deira, the southern portion of Northumbria, when Ivar closed his first campaign. He met with no real resistance. A few years later his work was thoroughly completed by Halfdene, his brother—another son, tradition says, of the great pirate chieftain Ragnar Lodbrok, the Viking who stormed and plundered Paris. Halfdene burned and ruined every abbey and home of prayer and learning in the northern province of Bernicia.

In the awful march of Ivar, and the desolating progress somewhat later of his brother, the Viking Halfdene, passed away the historic houses of Hilda at Streoneshalch (Whitby) ; Melrose, where Cuthbert was trained under Eatan ; Lastingham, loved by the brothers Ceadda and Chad ; Tynemouth, and a host of others. *Not one was left* in all that wide Northumbrian realm. Bishoprics were wiped out ; abbeys, monks, nuns, all disappeared beneath this flood of pagan conquerors. Not only were the great and small religious houses destroyed, and the communities of monks and nuns slain or scattered,

but the church organisation, devised in the first instance by archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, and subsequently elaborated and perfected by great prelates like Egbert and Albert of York, was completely broken up, and well-nigh vanished under that desolating avalanche of heathen Danes. In the eighth century the archbishops of York ruled over a vast diocese, stretching from the banks of the Humber to the distant shores of the Forth. Six suffragan bishops watched over and administered the parochial divisions outside the wide area under the charge of the greater monasteries, which, more or less, seem to have been independent themselves of episcopal control. The suffragan bishoprics included the storied Lindisfarne ; Hexham, where Wilfrid ruled during the last year of his eventful life ; Lindsey, on the south of the Humber ; Ripon, with its ancient minster especially loved by Wilfrid, and eventually the resting place of his honoured remains ; Galloway and Glasgow, to the north. These bishoprics entirely disappeared, and some two hundred years later, when the Norman William the Conqueror became the master of England, and once more Christianity had made some way in the Danish districts of the north, only two suffragans acknowledged the supremacy of the archbishops of York—the bishops of Durham and of Glasgow ; the see of Durham occupying the area which once, before the coming of the Dane, included Lindisfarne. Hexham, and part of Ripon.

The entire north of England—the country lying between the Humber and the Forth—was involved in this utter ruin. All the monastic libraries, all the schools, all the stored-up treasures of knowledge were swept away. Teachers and pupils alike disappeared. Christianity, save where it lingered amid the remote villages and homesteads, had vanished out of a land which became henceforth the undisputed possession of pagan Danish conquerors, determined to uproot the religion of the Crucified, and to substitute in its place the altars of Thor and Woden and the deities of Scandinavia and the far north. Whereas Northumbria had been the home of letters and culture, the great religious centre whence issued the missionary leaders of the centre and south of England, from this time onward, until long after the Norman Conquest in the year 1066, it was the rudest and most ignorant part of Britain : so complete, so thorough, had been the work of the Viking brothers, Ivar and Halfdene.

York alone seems to have been partly spared. The ancient Northumbrian capital became the residence and chief seat of the Danish government ; and from henceforth the north of England must be considered a Danish settlement. The archbishop there was still suffered to govern the poor remnant of Christian churches, and to rule over the conquered Christian people of Northumbria ; but we never hear again of the famous school and its great library. It had perished utterly in the fatal Danish conquest.

A singular but wide-spread tradition exists, which closely connects "the coming of the Danes" in 866–867, which ended in the ruin of Northumbria and the consequent permanent settlement of the Dane in England, with the story of the

great Viking captain, Ragnar Lodbrok. The famous pirate is chiefly known from his successful raid up the Seine and the capture and plunder of Paris, already related. The northern traditions—no doubt founded on fact—relate how this popular hero, subsequently to his French exploits, against the advice of his wife, Aslauga, built three long-ships, considerably larger than the usual size of these dreaded boats. Manned with Viking crews, Ragnar Lodbrok sailed on a plundering venture of his own to the north of England; the fifty-first, he tells us in the poem bearing his name which he had undertaken in the course of that destructive life of his. The great size of the ships was the occasion of their being wrecked on the jagged iron-bound Northumbrian coast. After the loss of the long-ships, Ragnar Lodbrok found himself in a country of enemies, his own force comparatively small, and without the usual means of Viking escape seawards. Ælla, the reigning king of southern Northumbria —Deira—fell upon him with far superior numbers. In spite of the usual Viking bravery, the Danes were overpowered, Ragnar Lodbrok was taken prisoner alive, and king Ælla condemned his formidable captive to perish in a dungeon, stung to death by snakes. The well-known death-song of Ragnar purports to have been written by the dying hero himself; and in it, after singing his own exploits and expressing his perfect willingness to depart for the halls of Woden, he commends to his sons the sacred duty of avenging his cruel death. His sons, it is said, made up the most formidable group of sea-pirates of that day, including the too famous names of Ivar and Hubbo and Halfdene. The death of the old Viking captain is placed about 862, or perhaps a little later. The invasion of East Anglia under Ivar and his brothers took place in the year 866, and the fatal march on York and Northumbria to avenge their father, in the following year. One of the two rival kings of Northumbria who fell in the stricken fight of York was Ælla, the slayer of Ivar's father, Ragnar Lodbrok.

There is probably some basis of truth in the wild, wide-spread legend; but the coming of the Danes in 866, and the conquest and settlement in Northumbria, must be attributed to causes wider and more far-reaching than simply to any passionate revenge for a father's defeat and cruel death. These causes have already been discussed. The death-song itself is placed by modern criticism many years later than the event it commemorates; some would even place its composition two centuries later. If the theory of its late composition be accepted, we must then assume that, like many other popular poems claiming an antiquity which from various reasons does not appear demonstrable, this poem in its present shape was simply based upon older fragments, and that the form in which we now possess it was a redaction of some older lilt.

The song is, however, of singular interest to us. It paints, no doubt fairly accurately, some of the phases of that Viking society which so gravely affected the work, nay, the very existence, of Christianity, and the civilisation which Christianity brought in its train in northern and eastern England; tells us something of the spirit which lived in the hearts of these Northmen pagans,

HOW THE DANES CAME UP THE CHANNEL A THOUSAND YEARS AGO

(By permission, from the picture by Herbert A. Bone.)

who worked such irreparable mischief in the eighth and ninth centuries, and effectually destroyed, not only the progress, but even the very life of the church in a large portion of England.

The aspirations and the hopes, the life to which the Northmen looked forward after death, and also the joys of their present existence, are well and tersely set forth in this so-called "Death Song" of Lodbrok, the renowned and admired Danish hero. The wild delight in battle, the chief joy of the Viking, is thus described (one of the bloody raids on England is the subject of this part of the "Song"):

"We hewed with our swords.
Hundreds, I declare, lay round
The horses of the island rocks,
At the English promontory.
We sailed to the battle
Six days before the hosts fell.
* * * * *
Destiny was with our swords."

Further on, the songman proceeds in a similar strain when he speaks of a raid, apparently on the coast of Northumberland at Lindisfarne:

"We had the music of swords in the morning
For our sport at Lindis-eyri;
With three kingly heroes
Many fell into the jaws of the wolf;
The hawk plucked the flesh with the wild beasts."

After dwelling on the fierce joys of battle, the dying hero speaks of the disastrous change in his own fortunes, so unlooked-for:

"It seems to me, from experience,
That we follow the decrees of fates:
Few escape the decrees of the birth goddesses.
Never did I believe that from Ælla
The end of my life would come,
When I strewed the bloody slaughter,
And urged my planks on the lakes.
Largely we feasted the beasts of prey
Along the bays of Scotland."

But he consoles himself with his faith in the gods' promises of joys and pleasures in the future life—such joys and pleasures! Yet these were the veritable hopes of the Vikings of old:

"It delights me continually,
That the seats of Baldor's father,
I know, are strewn for guests.
We shall drink ale immediately
From the large hollowed skulls.
Young men, grieve not at death
In the mansions of dread Fiolner.
I come not with the words of fear
Into the hall of Vithris."

As the adders and snakes are stinging him to death, he comforts himself with the thoughts of his children taking a fierce revenge upon the authors of his cruel sufferings. (The "Aslauga" referred to was his wife.)

"Here would for me
All the sons of Aslauga
The bright brands of Hilda awake,
If they knew but the danger
Of my encounter.
What a number of snakes
Full of venom strike me.
I gained a true mother for my children,
That they might have brave hearts.
* * * * *
Grim dangers surround me from the adder,
Vipers dwell in the home of my heart."

Again he recalls the glories and work of his past Viking life:

"Fifty and one times have I
Called the people to the appointed battles
By the warning-spear messenger.
Little do I believe that of men
There will be any
King more famous than myself.
When going, I grasped and reddened my spear.
The Aesir must invite me;
I will die without a groan."

Dying, he sings with a glad strain:

"We desire this end,
The Disir goddesses invite me home;
As if from the hall of him rejoicing in spoils

From Odin, sent to me.
Glad shall I, with the Aesir,
Drink ale in my lofty seat.
The hours of my life glide away,
But laughing I will die."

The conquest of the northern part of England and the destruction of the church in Northumbria was, however, only a part of the Viking scheme in England. They had fallen on the north because they were well aware of its hopelessly disunited condition, and of the bitter feuds which had for so long distracted the unhappy country, which, as the Danes were fully conscious, would paralyse any real and protracted defence. The result justified their policy ; never was a rout of an entire people so sudden and so complete. But the Danish chief Ivar knew well that the hardest part of his task in reducing England to the condition of a pagan Scandinavian land still lay before him. Well-nigh the whole of the south of England was included under the kingdom of Wessex, and there the union of "the Christian church with the State" was, as we have seen, peculiarly close and intimate. No divided interests in Wessex weakened their power of resistance ; there were no rival claimants to the ancient throne of Cerdic, the West-Saxon. The halo of the statesman and soldier which had settled round the head of the great Egbert, had not faded, and his grandchild, who was at the time of the coming of the Danes king of Wessex, had inherited not a little of the ability of his famous predecessor. The power and influence of the church, too, was then very great, and worked in perfect harmony with the king and the forces of national defence. But in the disturbed and anxious condition of England, with the terrible Viking at their very doors, all progress in civilisation was, of course, stayed. We hear nothing now of the school of Canterbury. Study was forgotten in the great crisis ; all learning was fading rapidly out of the land.

Ivar and his Viking host marched in the year 868 southward into Mercia, which nominally still acknowledged the overlordship of Wessex ; and in Nottingham, a well-known Mercian centre—known apparently then as Snottrynham—they passed the winter of that year. The Mercians were thoroughly alarmed. They looked forward to sharing the fate of Northumbria, and their under-king Burrhed urgently prayed for assistance from his over-lord, king Ethelred of Wessex. Mercia touched Wessex. If Mercia became a Viking possession and a pagan country, the future fate of Wessex and the south could be easily foreseen. Ethelred and a powerful West-Saxon army arrived in the year 869 before the entrenchments of the Vikings at Nottingham. The Danes, recognising the superiority of Ethelred's force, declined to give them battle in the open, and remained behind their fortifications at Nottingham. Ethelred, though he failed to storm the armed Danish camp, yet inflicted upon Ivar's force such severe losses that eventually the Viking chief agreed to a temporary treaty, in which he promised to evacuate Mercia.

The following year, however, witnessed a more terrible attack on the part of the Danes. This year (A.D. 870) will ever be darkly marked as one of the most disastrous to the Anglo-Saxon church. The

Danes had now been in England well-nigh four years, and had learned where serious resistance might be looked for and where the most fatal blows could be directed against the religion they hated with so fierce a hatred. Fairly remote from Wessex were those vast fen districts which then stretched from the south of the Humber to the country round Ely. In these districts were located several of the most famous and wealthy of the monastic houses of middle England. The riches, real and supposed, of the great fen abbeys were a powerful attraction to the Viking warriors who fought under Ivar's banner; while the destruction of such mighty and renowned centres of Christianity would largely appeal to those more important Northmen chieftains who looked beyond mere plunder, and who were persuaded that with the destruction of Christianity was closely bound up the eventual success of their race.

Ivar and his brother Hubbo, the traditional sons of the renowned Ragnar Lodbrok, were evidently skilled strategists as well as valiant soldiers, and among a cruel group of pirate invaders, men utterly reckless of human life and careless of human suffering, have attained a sad pre-eminence. The Viking raid in the Lindesey and Kesteven districts, besides the utter destruction of the religious houses, was apparently accompanied with more than the usual attendant miseries which characterised the Viking marches. A later chronicle tells us that the local magistrates opposed the march of Ivar. If this be the case, these defenders of their country were certainly utterly routed, for the whole land of Lindesey and Kesteven (two of the three ancient divisions of Lincolnshire; Lindesey being the largest of the three) and the country south of Kesteven, far into East Anglia, fell into the Danish hands, and they plundered, devastated, burned, destroyed at pleasure. The years 868–9 and 870 were years, indeed, of terror to most of the unhappy counties lying between the Humber and the Thames. In the course of this terrible raid of Ivar the noble abbey of Bardeney was destroyed, and its monks were murdered. The important fen abbeys of Croyland and Peterborough shared the same fate, as did the great and famous home of prayer founded by Etheldreda on the little hill of Ely, rising above the fen country which stretched around it far and wide on every side.

We have but few dependable contemporary notices of the cruelties and atrocities perpetrated in this bitter time of trial, through which the Church of England passed in the darkest hour of her eventful story, beyond some few dry statements speaking of the sacking and burning of the more famous monasteries and nunneries. Most of the details we possess are derived from later accounts, founded, no doubt, on local tradition preserved by the few "religious" who escaped from the indiscriminate slaughter which usually accompanied the plundering of all that could be carried away, and the conflagration of the buildings of a religious house marked for destruction by the Danish Vikings of Ivar and Hubbo. From these traditions, founded, no doubt, upon local memories, we gather that many of the treasures of Croyland, which a few monks endeavoured to carry away to some safe

hiding-place, were lost somewhere in the deep fen waters. The Abbot of Croyland and his attendant priests were struck down monastic buildings which surrounded it was said to have lit up the surrounding marshes during fifteen days.

A DESCENT OF THE DANES.

(From the fresco by W. Bell Scott, H.R.S.A., at Wallington Hall, Northumberland, by permission of Sir George Trevelyan, Bart., M.P., from photo by J. Worsnop, Rothbury.)

at the altar, and were beheaded in the sanctuary. The famous library of Peterborough, the glory of that great religious house, was burned, and the flame of the conflagration of the church and the many

From the burning and sack of the Fen abbeys, the Viking invaders turned their attention to the neighbouring East Anglia, and entrenched themselves in a fortified camp at Thetford. A writer of the next

century describes East Anglia as almost surrounded by water; immense marshes, a hundred miles in extent, on the north; on the east and south, the ocean. Abbo of Fleury was apparently referring to the estuary of the Thames as the southern boundary. The soil he speaks of as fertile and pleasant. It was full of lakes two or three miles in extent, and *its marshes were filled with monks.* Allusion has already been several times made to the great progress, even at a comparatively early period, made by Christianity in East Anglia, under the rule of such under-kings as Anna, whose daughters were conspicuous among the founders of monasticism among their sex.

The East Anglian realm at the period of the Danish invasion was under the rule of Edmund. This East Engle sub-king appears in an extraordinary way to have attracted the love and admiration of his contemporaries. There seems to have been considerable resistance offered in the eastern counties to the Danish invaders; but the superiority of the Vikings as trained soldiers, their reckless daring, aided by the skilful generalship of their leaders, Ivar and Hubbo, enabled them utterly to defeat the East Anglian forces. Their beloved king Edmund was summoned by Ivar to divide with him his treasures, to reign as his lieutenant, and to abandon Christianity for the gods of the north. "Who are you," so runs the haughty traditional message of Ivar, "that you should dare to withstand our power? The storm of the ocean is no bar to our enterprise, but positively serves us instead of oars. The roarings of the sky, its lightning flashes, have never injured us. Submit, then, to a master whom even the elements serve."

King Edmund's reply was memorable. The story is repeated by Abbo of Fleury, who wrote in the next century. He tells us he had the recital from the famous prelate Dunstan, who had heard it from the lips of an old soldier of Edmund's, who simply and faithfully recounted it on oath to king Athelstan. Dunstan would tell the story, he said, "with eyes full of tears." "Tell Ivar," answered Edmund to the messenger bidding him abjure Christianity, "that I am not terrified by his threats. You may destroy this frail body; death is more desirable than servility." The savage Danish chief then took the king, bound him to a tree, scourged him with remorseless severity, then riddled the tortured body with arrows, and cut off his head.

The brave patience with which he submitted to his cruel sufferings, the remembrance of his gracious and kindly life, his exalted rank, in a peculiar way touched the heart of the English; and the memory of Edmund, king and martyr, was venerated and preserved for centuries. His fame was by no means confined to his own East Anglian realm. We find traces of the love and admiration he excited in the north and south of England. He was chosen as the patron saint of many a church. His martrydom, especially in the eastern counties, even long after the Norman Conquest was a favourite subject for stained window and frescoed wall; while over his honoured remains, which, a favourite and well-known legend tells us, for ages saw no corruption, rose one of the most stately of the mediæval abbeys, under

the shadow of which grew up the vast and famous monastery of Bury St. Edmunds. Its sacred and pathetic ruins still, after more than a thousand years, serve to keep green in the minds of Englishmen the memory of the saintly East Anglian king. And Edmund, with his power of winning his subjects' love, with his quiet bravery in preferring a painful death rather than deny Christ and build up altars to Thor and Woden, was a typical instance of the powerful hold which the teaching of the Church of England had obtained upon the hearts of the Anglo-Saxons at the time of the coming of the Danes in the last half of the ninth century.

From that year (870) East Anglia, like Lincolnshire and Northumbria, passed under the permanent Danish rule. The unchallenged supremacy of the heathen Vikings now stretched from the broad estuary of the Thames in the south to the far north of the Engle kingdom of Northumbria; and, roughly, included northern and middle England, watered by the East Anglian Ouse, the Yorkshire Humber and the Trent, by the Tees and the Wear of Durham, by the Northumbrian Tyne and the border-river of the Tweed. The actual subjugation of Western Mercia only took place some four years later, in 874, when it submitted without a struggle to the Danish occupation. But from the date of the conquest of East Anglia and the death of Edmund, in 870, it paid tribute to the Viking chief and acknowledged his supremacy.

This Danish conquest of the largest half of England, so long meditated and prepared, was the most important, and by far the most *thorough*, of the many Viking invasions; the somewhat later occupation of Normandy in France being the only other permanent settlement of importance. The presence of the long-ships, with their fierce crews of armed pirates, was felt along the coasts of the continent of Europe as an awful and terrible curse. Save in Normandy, however—that great French province watered by the Seine—the presence of the Viking only meant a piratical raid; desolating and destructive, causing untold misery and woe, but generally passing and transitory. But in northern and eastern England it was an invasion, a conquest, deliberately planned and carefully carried out. It meant a permanent settlement. It aimed at the uprooting of Christianity, and the substitution of the worship of Scandinavian Woden and Thor and the northern gods in place of the Christ of the Christian. The Viking succeeded in making a permanent conquest; but he failed in the long run in his purpose of uprooting the faith of Christ.

Although, however, he thus failed in his hope of destroying the religion which he hated, this last great effort of a dying paganism succeeded in arresting the splendid march of Christianity, which, during the seventh and eighth centuries, had accomplished such vast work in Anglo-Saxon Britain. For a long period its work was paralysed—well-nigh ruined—in the south of the great island; while in the north it virtually came to an end, and for two centuries, until after the Norman conquest, northern England almost entirely disappeared from the records of civilisation and Christianity — that illustrious north, which for so long had been a true centre of religion and learning, not only for

England, but for much of the continent of Europe. The religion and learning of the north of the island (Northumbria)—as it has been well said—*died of the Danes*.

More than a thousand years have passed since the dread year 866, which witnessed this "coming of the Danes" into England. Many changes has our country witnessed; many brilliant pages in the world's eventful history has the island and her people written. Another wave of conquest, bearing with it more far-reaching consequences, has passed over it. The same dynasty, it is true, which gave to Wessex Egbert and Ethelred and Alfred, still sits on the English throne; the same church, with its changeless traditions, watches over the spiritual work of England; to the vast majority of English men and women, the connection of the Dane with England is a story long forgotten. But the Danish occupation was a stern reality, and as far as Christianity and learning and the arts of civilisation were concerned, not only paralysed all progress, but succeeded in wiping out well-nigh all that had been done in the past. Nor has the north, where the Viking occupation was most complete, ever recovered anything of its old supremacy in letters and in art. It has again, after the lapse of a thousand years, become famous as the chief manufacturing centre of the Western world; famous, too, as the iron mart and coal mart and cotton mart of Europe and the world; but when the Dane burned the monastic libraries of Jarrow and Wearmouth and killed the church school of York, the homes of literature and art were for ever removed to other centres.

The forgotten Viking settler has, moreover, left many traces of his long residence in England still with us, though ten centuries and more have come and gone since Ivar and the Vikings occupied the land they had desolated. In the north—in the Ridings of Yorkshire—the Dane's presence is marked by the names of many localities, where the English termination "tun" or "ham" has been replaced by the Scandinavian or Danish "by," or the less common "dale." Even the heathen faith which replaced Christianity is still commemorated in such names as Baldersby and Thornaby, and in not a few Danish names which still linger among the villages and townships of Yorkshire, for example, Ellerby, Grimsby, Aislaby, Whitby, Ormsby, Swainby. Cleveland, or Cliff-land, long continued a Scandinavian district; of its twenty-seven lords mentioned in the Domesday Book, twenty-three bore Danish names. The capital city of Northumbria, once the "university" of England, the resort of scholars from all part of Europe, became more and more a Danish city, and was largely inhabited by Danish traders. In eastern Mercia—in the modern counties of Derby, Nottingham, Lincoln, Leicester — we find the Danish "by" still clinging to the villages and towns of the England of to-day.* In parts of East Anglia, the same peculiarity can be traced, notably in Norfolk, and in Suffolk round the mouth of the Yare. But East Anglia, as we shall see, Danish though it was, quickly became Christian again; and this accounts for the comparatively few traces of the Viking conquest in the eastern counties.

* *See* Atkinson: "Whitby," chap. i., and Green: "Conquest," chap. iii.

To return to our story. More than two-thirds of England was now in the power of the Vikings. The design of changing Britain, the Christian stronghold of the Engle and the Saxon, into a pagan Danish realm, appeared near its complete fulfilment. The charred ruins of the great northern monasteries and the mighty fen abbeys, told of the ruin of the Church of England in the north and east of the island. Mercia, though not yet conquered, was at the feet of the pagan conqueror and paid him tribute. The extreme northern and central districts of the island were only waiting the appearance of the dreaded Vikings, whose numbers probably were not sufficient at once to complete their conquest ; but these great districts were utterly helpless in the presence of the dreaded Dane, and a few years later fell, without an effort to avert the storm which soon descended upon them, sweeping away in its disastrous course, as usual, every abbey and monastery.

When, in the year 870, East Anglia was forced to bow before the Danish Ivar and Hubbo, and its king submitted to his martyrdom, England, north of Wessex, was virtually won, and a new era of triumphant paganism seemed to have commenced. Only Wessex and the south still resisted ; as yet the Viking had made no lodgment in the ancestral dominions of Ethelred, the grandson of Egbert, of the

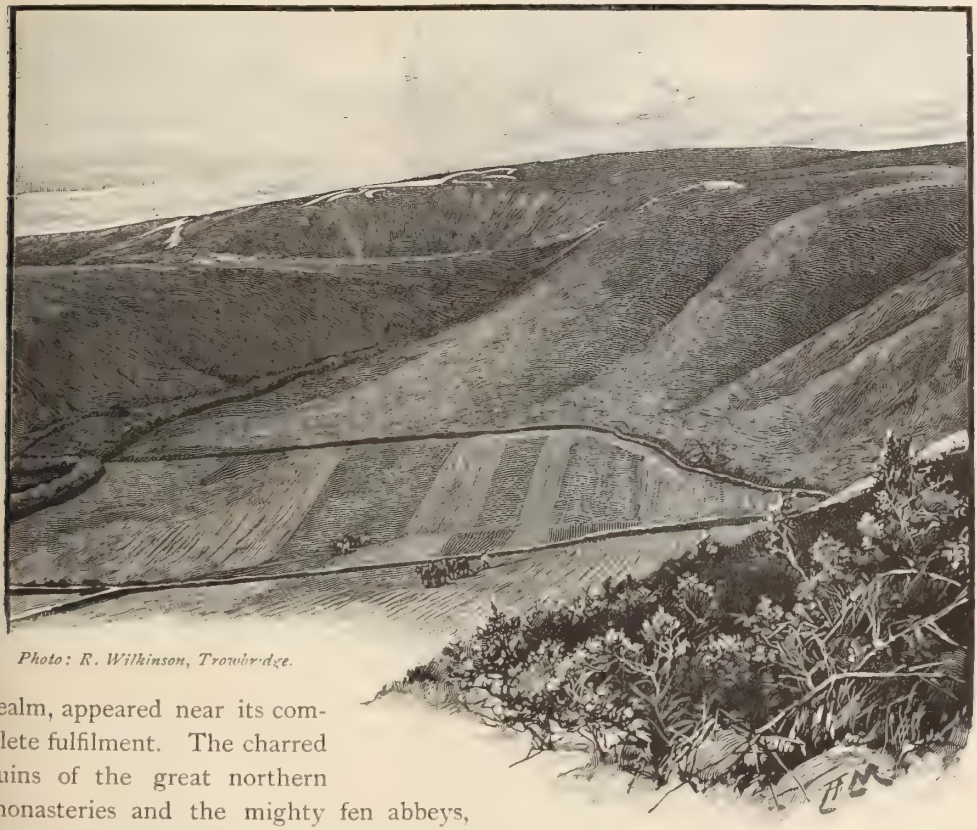


Photo: R. Wilkinson, Trowbridge.

THE WHITE HORSE, NEAR UFFINGTON, TRADITIONALLY THE SITE OF THE BATTLE OF ASHDOWN.

ancient royal race of Cerdic. But Wessex now stood face to face with the conquering Dane ; for the first time there was—to use a modern term—no buffer-state between the

CARVED OBJECT OF WHALE'S BONE OF UNKNOWN USE.
(*From a barrow, Namdalen, Norway.*) (*Brit. Mus.*)

West Saxon and the Viking. Everything now turned upon the conquest of Wessex. If this deed of arms could be successfully carried through, then the work of the Dane, so carefully prepared for, hitherto so triumphantly persevered in, would be accomplished, and a great pagan Viking kingdom would be erected on the ruins of the once powerful Christian England ; a kingdom which would serve as a strong basis of operations for the Viking race to carry on their triumphant warfare on the continent of Europe, the sea-board of which, and its great river-roads leading into the interior of the continent, was already in their hands. It was indeed an awful crisis for Christianity—that year 870, in which Edmund of East Anglia, king and martyr, pierced by the cruel arrows of the Vikings Ivar and Hubbo, passed to his eternal rest.

There was no delay on the part of the Danes. The one barrier to their complete success in England must be stormed at once. The Viking host which had conquered the Eastern counties, at once invaded Wessex. The main body of their army, under a leader afterwards famous under the name of Guthrun, with Bægseg, King of Danish Bernicia (Northumbria), and Halfdene, and various renowned jarls—their harsh names are preserved to us as the two Sidrocs, Fræna, Harold, and others—headed the invading Danish host. Ivar returned to York : perhaps he felt the hand of fatal disease already pressing upon him, for a tradition speaks of the death of the great freebooter in the following year.

The Vikings entered Wessex by way of the Thames, and sailing past London, seized upon the stronghold of Reading as the centre of their operations. The scene of the first battles between the Danes and the men of Wessex was mostly that Berkshire country lying westward of Reading as far as the Vale of the White Horse. The forces of Ethelred fought stoutly for their country. Never yet in the English invasion had the Danes met with such a valiant organised resistance. The success was varying, until a pitched battle was fought at Æcesdune (Ashdown) in Berkshire. In this fierce contest Alfred, king Ethelred's young brother, first distinguished himself by his splendid bravery and tactical skill. A singular memory is preserved of a striking incident of this

desperate fight. Early in the day, Alfred being hard-pressed by the foe, urgently prayed the king, his brother, to bring him reinforcements without delay. King Ethelred was hearing mass, and engaged in the solemn prayer which he deemed the best preparation for the day of stern battle which lay before him. He bade the messenger of Alfred tell his brother that the king would come when the mass was done: "God first, man after," were Ethelred's traditional words. The religion of the Wessex court must have been very real to have prompted such a reply at such a moment; and it came from no superstitious weakling, but from a right noble and valiant monarch of men. For the battle of Ashdown was a victory for the West Saxons. King Bægseg was slain by the hand of Ethelred himself; five of the Viking jarls and a great number of the army perished in this bloody engagement. But the Danes, who retreated into their armed camp at Reading, were shortly afterwards strongly reinforced with fresh companies of Vikings from beyond the seas. Another battle was fought at Meretune (Merton, in Oxfordshire). After a long-disputed fight, the West Saxons, who had lost heavily, retreated, and then king Ethelred received his mortal wound. The king survived the battle, but died very shortly after. His remains were laid in royal state in Wimborne Minster. The regular burying-place of the West Saxon kings in the abbey of Sherborne was probably, in this dark moment of the Danish invasion, in the hands of the Vikings.

Ethelred's career as a sovereign lay amidst troublous times, and his well-deserved fame has been obscured in the far greater glory which surrounds the memory of his brother and successor Alfred. Ever memorable, though, in the history of England, will be his march into Mercia, when he compelled the Vikings to retreat; his first disposition of the West Saxon army of defence; and his victory at Ashdown. These were the first beginnings of that splendid national defence which eventually, under his more famous brother, succeeded in rolling back the victorious Danish invasion, and thus preserving England, and perhaps a far wider area on the Continent, from becoming a vast pagan empire.

Ethelred left direct heirs in two infant sons, but the extreme peril of the kingdom, the actual presence in the heart of Wessex of a powerful Danish army, naturally placed on one side any claim to the succession of these infants. In the lifetime of Ethelred even, Alfred was his brother's acknowledged successor. No hint has ever been given that Alfred was a usurper, or that he set aside his nephews. He was at once unanimously acknowledged as the sovereign. But when he assumed the crown of Cerdic, in 871, it seemed indeed a heritage of sorrow.

CHAPTER XVII.

ENGLAND'S HERO KING.

Gloomy Accession and Prospects of Alfred—Brave but Unsuccessful Struggles—Forced to Concealment—Legends of Athelney—Glorious Victory at Ethandune—Its Decisive Character and Influence upon Christendom—Peace of Wedmore and Division of England—Alfred's Own Account of the Work before him—A Ruined Church—His Prayer for "Stillness"—Alternate Periods of War and Rest—Alfred as a King—Indefatigable Industry and Self-Sacrifice—Creates an Army and Navy—Introduces a Budget, and its Characteristics—His Noble Character—Momentous Importance of his Work to Christianity in Europe.

ALFRED, grandson of Egbert, the fourth and only surviving son of Ethelwulf, was about twenty-two years old, when with general consent he assumed the crown of Wessex and the chief command of the Saxon forces of defence, A.D. 871. We hear of no official coronation, of no solemn services, of no rejoicings such as generally accompany the accession of a new sovereign. Straight from the grave of his brother, wounded to the death in the late disastrous fight at Merton, he hastened to take the supreme command of the sorely disheartened Saxon army. Ill-fortune, however, dogged his footsteps. Defeated several times in a series of skirmishes rather than battles, the young king of Wessex, with the advice of his Witan, for the first time in the sad story of the Wessex and Danish war, purchased with gold a temporary respite for his harassed country, and the Danes agreed, in consideration of this humiliating bargain, to evacuate Wessex.

Indeed, Wessex was completely exhausted, its land overrun and harried, its towns pillaged, its armies defeated and dispirited. In one short year we hear of eight pitched battles having been fought, besides many smaller conflicts and skirmishes; with varying success, it is true, but generally to the disadvantage of the Saxons. The Danes, too, were willing to accept the ransom offered. The prolonged and obstinate defence, no doubt, had seriously weakened their invading forces. They contented themselves with having harried and humiliated the southern kingdom; and for a season, at least, agreed to leave Wessex alone, other and more profitable opportunities of conquests at that juncture presenting themselves.

Their armies, thus for a time freed from the stubborn and exhausting campaigns in Wessex, once more planned the complete subjugation of Mercia; and after a year spent in consolidating their power in southern Northumbria, in 872–873 they burst upon the defenceless midlands. They had little difficulty in the eastern part of central England. Burrhed, the last of the Mercian kings, gave up the hopeless contest and wandered away as a pilgrim to Rome, where he died, a sad exile, in the year 874. He was buried in the Pope's city with royal honours, in the church of the Virgin adjoining the Saxon schools.

In the next year—875—Halfdene, the brother of Ivar, the son of Ragnar

Lodbrok, led a considerable division of the wandering Viking force from its recent conquest of Mercia northward again, and completed the subjugation of northern England. The monasteries in the far north, which Ivar in his first great invasion had not reached, were all burned and sacked by Halfdene in this last terrible raid, which completed the destruction of the Church of England in Northumbria. The portion of the Viking host which did not accompany Halfdene also left Repton, where, after sacking and burning the great abbey, the burial-place of the Mercian kings, they had quietly spent the previous winter. This army under Guthrun, the well-known pirate chief, took up its quarters at Cambridge. To his armed camp there flocked Viking recruits from all quarters, for it was known that Guthrun was preparing for another desperate attack on Wessex. This was in 876.

SEDGEMOOR, FROM MIDDLEZOY.

The plan of the invasion was most carefully matured. Suddenly the Cambridge camp was broken up. Marching swiftly to the near sea-coast, the Vikings sailed round the east and south of England, and landing on the coast of Dorset, seized the town and convent of Wareham, which they made their head-quarters. Alfred was unable to make resistance against the cruel invaders, and for a second time purchased a

THE ISLE OF ATHELNEY.

precarious peace with Wessex gold. It was of little avail, however; for the invaders, leaving Dorsetshire, only retreated on Devon, where they made themselves masters of Exeter. Alfred, rightly considering this a breach of faith, hurried to besiege Exeter. The siege and reduction of Exeter was one of the bright spots of this terrible and devastating war. The Danes, who were starved into surrender, again agreed to leave the land in peace; but we find them still in Alfred's harried dominions, and wintering in Gloucester, in 877. Peace seemed further off than ever. The battles and skirmishes were endless, and were fought, as usual, with varying fortunes. In one of these, at a place called Kynwith, in Devon, a noble effort on the part of the Wessex defenders was made, and the famous war-standard of "The Raven," woven, says the story, in one morning by the three daughters of Ragnar Lodbrok for Ivar and Hubbo, was captured. This banner, the legend tells us, had a magic power: the great bird fluttered its wings when victory was near, but hung motionless and drooping before a defeat. But no gallantry, no reckless defence availed. The Vikings were again and again reinforced. Hubbo and a fleet of long-ships sailed up the Severn and joined the forces of Guthrun, and we suddenly hear of the Danes in great force in the very heart of Wessex, at Chippenham. The whole country seemed at their mercy.

This was the darkest hour of Alfred's career. All seemed lost. Wessex was utterly exhausted and dispirited, its cities pillaged, its land harried, its forces utterly unable to cope with the daring invaders, whose numbers, constantly recruited, seemed to increase with every battle, whether lost or won. Alone the brave and devoted West Saxon king refused to despair. This was the time when Alfred and his dispirited soldiers, his queen and her children, and a few devoted Wessex chieftains, retired to the almost inaccessible marshes in the heart of Somerset. The country where, during those weary months of waiting and watching, the great king devised those measures which resulted in the campaign that saved the Christianity of England, is well known. It was little more in those days than a vast morass, that district lying between the Polden hills and the Quantocks, with the river Parret running through it. The local names Sedgemoor, and the zoys, or rises crowned with marsh-villages, such as Chedzoy and Marshzoy, still tell us of the fens in the midst of which Alfred thought out that supreme attack which, at a moment when all seemed lost, rescued his native land from sinking under the flood of the Viking pagans.

Matthew of Westminster, who wrote in the fourteenth century, thus describes the resting-place where Alfred gathered the troops together for his last grand battle. "In the extreme borders of the English people towards the west, there is a place called Æthelingeie, or the isle of the nobles. It is surrounded by marshes, and so inaccessible that no one can get to it but in a small boat. It has a great wood of alders, and contains stags and goats and many animals of this kind. Its solid earth is scarcely two acres in breadth." Here, in this remote and unknown armed camp, the king remained about

three months, while he made preparations for the final struggle.

It is during his mysterious residence in this fen-fortress that there have gathered around Alfred those legends which, after a thousand years, still delight English boys in the life of our English hero.* They had probably been the burden of popular folk-songs sung by the people, who delighted in these quaint memories of the national deliverer. Of these the most popular was the well-known incident of the adventure in the cow-herd's hut, when the good wife, not knowing the king, set him to watch the bread as it was baking on the hearth. The hexameters which intersperse the prose narrative tell us, that the whole had evidently once been a popular song :—

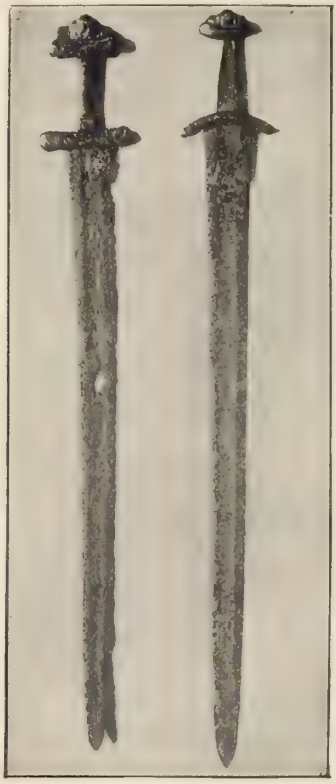
"Holloa, companion!
Dost not see that the bread there is burning?
Why lazily sit and not turn it?
Ready enough wilt thou be to take it from us and devour it."

Another favourite story is of the king, disguised as a minstrel, penetrating into the royal tent of Guthrun in the camp of the Danes, and thus becoming acquainted with the plans and the strength of his enemies. This account is most probably founded on fact. A beautiful but more mythical legend is preserved by William of Malmesbury, who wrote in the beginning of the twelfth century. It relates how to Alfred, sitting with the queen alone in his solitary hut of Athelney, came a beggar man, who asked for a piece of bread to assuage his hunger. With this poor starving Englishman the king divided his last loaf and a little wine still left in an almost empty pitcher. Then the poor guest suddenly vanished, and lo! the loaf was still unbroken, and the pitcher was full of wine to the brim! And that same night the great English saint, St. Cuthbert—whom he had relieved without knowing who was the strange beggar-guest—appeared to him in vision, with the glad tidings that his sufferings were about to end, and that the hour of deliverance was at hand.

After about three months—the wintertide had given place to spring, and it was the beginning of May, in 878, a memorable year in the story of England and her church—Alfred's plans were ripe, and once more he raised the Wessex standard, blazoned with the Golden Dragon of the ancient West Saxon dynasty. The thanes of Somerset joined him with their followers, and shortly afterwards the men of Hants and Wilts. The Danes in their armed camp near Westbury appear to have been taken by surprise. They evidently looked upon Wessex as utterly dispirited, and its conquest assured, while its king had disappeared, or at all events had withdrawn from any open hostility. Their brilliant series of successes in England had inspired them with a confidence that they were invincible, and they believed that the stubborn and long-protracted resistance their conquering arms had met with in Wessex had at last come to an end, and that, disheartened and defeated, the southern districts of the island were ready to accept the Viking supremacy, already acknowledged in the north, and east, and east-midland portions of England. The

* For the life of Alfred, see generally the exhaustive life by Dr. Pauli. Also Sharon Turner, books iv.-v., and Green's "Conquest," chap. iv., and Dean Hook's "Archbishop Plegmund."

widely-extended forests of Selwood had served as a veil to conceal the assembling of the men of Wessex, and when Alfred and his army suddenly appeared in front of the Danish lines near Chippenham, no



DANISH SWORDS FOUND IN THE WITHAM AT LINCOLN AND NEAR THE TEMPLE, LONDON (*British Museum*).

formal preparation had been made by Guthrun and the pirate Hasting, who were chief in command.

There was but little delay in Alfred's attack. The rival hosts joined battle at Ethandune, near the modern Westbury; and the men of Wessex under their brave king completely defeated the Danes. The beaten remnant of the Vikings took shelter in the lines of their armed camp, as they had so often successfully done before; but the victors, led by one who, besides his many kingly qualities, evidently possessed the powers of a great strategist, followed up their splendid success, and in a few days compelled the beaten army of Vikings to surrender, and as the price of their lives either to quit England or to become Christians, giving up Wessex for ever.

Never before had such a victory been won over the pagan invaders. It was absolutely decisive and crushing. The war was virtually over, and Wessex was finally delivered, thanks to the patient, indomitable courage, and the splendid generalship of Alfred. The tide of Viking victory had at last turned, and Wessex and western Mercia were for ever saved from the supremacy of the Northern invaders, who had so nearly gained possession of the whole island. Large numbers of the defeated army were allowed to leave the land, and under Hasting sailed in their long-ships for France, where once more they played their old terrible part of pirate invaders; the remainder, under Guthrun, *accepted Christianity*, and returned to the eastern counties. A treaty was concluded between Wessex and the Danes, by which England was divided between Alfred and the Vikings. The treaty was concluded at Wedmore, in Somerset, in the summer of A.D. 878.

The power of the Danes never recovered this terrible blow. Their ravages, it is true, long continued to afflict France and the European continent. Northumbria and East Anglia and part of Mercia still were

theirs. But the spell of their awful name was broken. They had failed in their great enterprise to conquer England, and from the day of Alfred's victory in 878, their vast power gradually declined.

Roughly, the peace of Wedmore secured to Alfred and his West-Saxon dynasty Wessex, which included the entire south of England from Kent and the Medway to the heart of Devon and the Tamar ; and western Mercia, which embraced the largest portion of that great realm of the Middle English, from the estuary of the Ribble, in modern Lancashire, to the Severn sea. To Guthrun and the Danes the peace of Wedmore left the whole of the eastern counties, which were already completely occupied by Danish chieftains, Cambridgeshire, parts of Hertford, Bedford, and Huntingdon. The boundary-line between Danish and English Mercia was the old Roman road of Watling Street, which during most of its length may be said roughly to correspond with the line of the London and North-Western Railway as far north as Preston. The kingdom of Northumbria in its southern portion, Deira, as far north as the Tees, including Yorkshire and most of Derbyshire, was firmly held and permanently settled by the Danes. Mercia west of "Watling Street" became henceforth a part of the Wessex kingdom. The old royal Mercian line had become extinct when Burrhed fled before the Danish Guthrun, and died at Rome an exile. Alfred and his line became undisputed kings of Mercia, which, however, preserved its own Witanagemot and its own native Engle ruler, who was styled the ealderman, owning Alfred as over-lord.

THE PEACE OF WEDMORE.

The Mercian ealderman Ethelred was also closely united to the royal house of Wessex, in the person of the subsequently renowned Ethelfleda—Alfred's daughter—who is generally known as "The Lady of the Mercians."

But though king Alfred had saved Wessex, and with Wessex indirectly a large part of central England, it was a sad and diminished realm that he entered upon on the morrow of the decisive peace of Wedmore. A glance at the map showing the division of England by the articles of that famous treaty, will show how large a portion of the island had, after all, passed under the permanent domination of the Danes. All northern, eastern, and perhaps half of central Britain—for eastern Mercia was reckoned as part of the Danish territory. And it must be remembered that the Danish rule meant *the substitution of paganism for Christianity.* With the exception of Guthrun, the East Anglian ruler, whose conversion after the Danish rout of Ethandune was but precarious and doubtful, the Viking chiefs were pagans; relentless foes of Christianity, whose shrines they had pitilessly destroyed. In the whole of the north of England the church of Cuthbert and Aidan, of Bede and Hilda, had perished out of the land. A small Christian remnant remained in the great city of York, in which the pagan conquerors had settled themselves, adopting it as their principal royal seat; but its noble school was gone, and its library, once famed throughout Europe, was a thing of the past. Gone, too, were the mighty fen abbeys, once the pride of central and eastern England. The ruin which had befallen the Church of England, from the Tyne and Tees to the Thames, was complete.

In his own Wessex, which, after years of painful struggles and hard and desperate fighting, he had freed at last from the Dane, things were somewhat brighter. Christianity had not utterly perished, but it was a feeble and dying church that Alfred had to do with, when at length he was left alone in his ancestral dominions. Schools and monasteries, churches and abbeys, for the most part had gone down before the pitiless Viking storm. But the king did not despair of a restoration for the church he loved so well. "All might be set right," he wrote, "if only we have stillness."

Nothing gives so vivid a picture of the awful desolation which rested on the church of Wessex (and other portions of Christian England were, as we have pointed out, in a yet worse plight) as Alfred's own words written at a later period of his stormy, brilliant reign. These striking words appear in a preface he wrote to his translation of his favourite book, Gregory the Great's "Pastoral Care," when that "stillness" for which he had prayed so earnestly and touchingly, had for a blessed season settled over his kingdom. Alfred is addressing his friend and adviser, bishop Wulfsig, of Sherborne, and looks back on what the Church of England once was before the coming of the Vikings. "I wish thee to know that it comes very often in my mind what wise men there were in England, both laymen and ecclesiastics, and how happy those times were to England; how the kings who then had the government of the people, obeyed God and His messengers; how they both preserved their peace, their

customs, and their power at home, and increased their territory abroad; and how they prospered both in peace and in war. The sacred profession was diligent both to teach and to learn, and in all the offices which they should do to God. Men from abroad sought wisdom and learning hither in this country, though we must now go out of it to obtain knowledge if we wish to have it." . . . . . "So clean was it fallen out of England, that there were very few on this side of the Humber who understood their service in English, or were able to translate a Latin epistle into English, and I think there were not many beyond the Humber. So few such there were that I cannot think of a single instance south of the Thames when I began to reign. . . . . Thanks be to God that we have now some teachers in our stalls."

The king in the course of the same preface gently refers to some past neglect and lukewarmness which had come over the church, after those golden days of learning and religion which he had been regretting so bitterly and pathetically. "We have loved," said Alfred, "only the name of being Christians, and very few of the duties. When I remembered all this, then I thought also I saw, *before it was all spoiled and burnt*, how the churches throughout the English nation were filled with treasures and books, and also with a great multitude of God's servants." Then he mourns over the decadence of true learning, which had evidently began to creep over the land *before* the coming of the Vikings, and the awful destruction and ruin which subsequently followed in their footsteps. "They," alluding evidently to the generation immediately preceding the Danish invasion, "had very little fruit of the books, because they could understand nothing of them, because they were not written in their own language. They say our elders"—no doubt alluding to men like Theodore, Hadrian, Aldhelm, and their contemporaries and pupils—"who held these places before them, loved wisdom, and through it obtained weal, and left it to us. . . . . When I thought of all this, then I wondered greatly that none of the great and wise men who were formerly in the English nation, and had fully learned all the books, had not translated any part of them into their own native tongue; but I soon answered myself and said, that they did not think men would ever become so careless, and that learning would so decay."

The "Wessex and Mercia" which the great Anglo-Saxon king had with so much difficulty preserved from the all-conquering Viking, was, as far as men could see, a ruined land; monasteries and schools burnt, Canterbury sacked, Winchester sacked, Sherborne sacked, the country harried, the commerce destroyed, Christianity apparently dying, and those ministers of religion who were left, sunk in terrible ignorance. And yet Alfred did not despair. If he could only have a season of peace and quietness, a respite from desolating wars and cruel raids, he believed he could bring back security and even prosperity to his country; and, better still, that he would be able to restore the influence of the waning and fast dying church, and win back for it something at least of its ancient fame for learning.

For Alfred, without doubt the greatest of our English kings, a consummate general,

almost recklessly brave, a wise and painstaking law-giver, a statesman in the highest sense of the far-reaching word, a patient and devoted scholar and student, was first and foremost a man of God; one who believed with his whole heart and soul that the well-being of the people he loved so well was intimately bound up with the practice, not merely the profession, of a pure Christianity. This Christianity, he felt, in common with those devout and ardent souls who had laid so well its foundations amongst us, must be something learned and cultured as well as pious and earnest, else it would utterly fail in its high and saintly mission, and in the end would fade and die.

We possess no detailed information of the successive steps which Alfred took to restore the broken and ruined church life in England. We know he succeeded, however, in gaining for it once more a noble position among the churches of Europe. We have to gather up incidental details and to piece them together, as in the next chapter, and thus to form our story of his great work in building up again the well-nigh ruined fabric of the Church of England in Wessex and in "English" Mercia. Peace, quiet — some period of rest from mere perpetual wars, was what he longed for. "If we only may have stillness," was the burden of the prayer of the patriot-king; then he felt that, with God's help, all might yet be set right.

The solemn prayer was partly granted, as all such true prayers ever are. The dates of the great reign of restoration may from this point of view be divided as follows :—

	A.D.
Peace of Wedmore	878
"*Stillness*" in England—6 quiet years...	878—884
Trouble with the Danes again	885—886
"*Stillness*" in England—5 quiet years...	887—892
War with the Viking Hasting and the Danes	893—897
"*Stillness*" in England—4 quiet years...	897—901
King Alfred dies, October 28th	901

After the peace of Wedmore, Alfred enjoyed his longest period of quiet, lasting some six years—878 to 884. The restless Danes under Guthrun, of East Anglia, who had consented to be baptised, soon sailed away from their East Anglian settlements—not, of course, giving them up—and commenced again their destructive raids on the banks of the Scheldt. Hasting, the yet more dreaded sea-pirate, who refused to become a Christian after the fight of Ethandune, also returned to the Continent, and became virtually master of the "Loire" country in Frank-land. But as in England, so on the Continent, these enemies of the human race now found sturdy opposition. The first terror of their fierce plundering bands had passed away. The determined stand by king Alfred, and the Danish repulse from Wessex, had produced its effect; and even in their favourite haunts along the banks of the Scheldt and the Rhine, the Seine and the Loire, they found they had much hard fighting before them.

The year 884 found the pirate fleets, dispirited by the resistance abroad, again in England. Alfred, however, met them now on sea, as well as on land, and although the sea-robbers were helped by their East Anglian kinsmen, they were forced on all sides to retreat, the larger number again returning to the Continent.

Nay, more: the treachery of Guthrun and the East-Anglian Danes was severely punished by a large slice being taken out of Guthrun's eastern-counties territory, and annexed to the English king's dominions. This gain to the cause of Christianity included most of Middlesex, included London in his Mercian government. This was the year when, as is graphically stated in the contemporary record of the English Chronicle, "all the Angel-cyn [*i.e.* people of the Engles or Angles] turned to Alfred, save those who were in bondage to Danish men." His power

ALFRED IN HIS STUDY.

with Hertford, Essex, and the important city of London, which henceforth became an English centre, and from this time, as was natural from its unrivalled position, gradually grew in commercial importance. The period of fierce fighting, which ended in the cession of London and the "home" counties, came to an end in 886. His Mercian ealderman and son-in-law, who acted as Alfred's sub-king in Mercia, now and reputation were now firmly established, and his authority generally recognised as king of the "England rescued from the Danes." The Engle and the Saxon were really fused for the first time, willingly, into one great people.

For about five or six years again "stillness" was over the realm of Alfred—from 886-7 to 893. During this period Guthrun, or East Anglia, who had received the

name of Guthrun-Athelstan when he was baptised after the victory of Ethandune, died (890). At his death the peace between Alfred and the East-Anglian Danish settlers was renewed.

In 893 the resistance on the Continent to the northern ravagers was so stout, that the Vikings there again determined to attack England. In Germany their bands had suffered a terrible defeat at the close of 891, and in Frankland the veteran pirate Hasting was pressed harder and harder by the gallant resistance of the people whose country he had so long and so ruthlessly harried. There was a double invasion of Vikings in that year of fierce struggle in England. In the south, two hundred and fifty Viking crews landed near Lymne, in Kent; and Hasting, too well known already in England, with eighty more long-ships, sailed up the Thames. Two armed camps—one in Wessex, the other in Kent—threatened the kingdom of Alfred in that dread winter of 893. In the following year Hampshire and Berkshire were harried by the invaders. For a year Alfred succeeded in preventing any further advance on the part of the invading hosts; when a general rising of the Danes settled in England in the eastern counties, in defiance of all their treaties, seemed once more to threaten Christian England with ruin. But the work of Alfred was too strong to be shaken seriously, even by this dangerous combination. For many months the flames of fierce war were indeed lit up in all parts of England, and we hear of desperate fighting in East Anglia, in the neighbourhood of London, in the Cotswolds, in the heart of the Severn valley; as far west even as Exeter; in the north-west round Chester. The wise military organisation of Alfred, however, everywhere made head against the pirate foes, and in 897 the East-Anglian Danes retreated to their own eastern-counties district, while Hasting, thoroughly foiled, sailed again with his long-ships, as he had done when defeated in former years, to his strongholds in Frankland. Once more Alfred had won "stillness" for his England, and from 897 to 901, when he passed to his well-earned rest, the "stillness" so hardly won remained unbroken.

There were thus three short periods of peace between 878 and 901 — short periods lasting, roughly, six, five, and four years each; the intervals between each being filled with fierce and bloody wars, in which, after hard and desperate fighting, the patriot English king always remained victor. In these broken fifteen years all Alfred's work—military work, legislative work, church work, literary work—was done; done too by a worn and sickly man, weakened by the constant attacks of a mysterious and agonising disease.* Men have marvelled how the king, seemingly so frail, and perpetually harassed with grave and painful sickness, found time in these few short years to learn so much, to read so much, to write so much. His faithful friends, some of the profoundest scholars of Europe, whom he had attracted to his

* The nature of the malady is unknown; but it was manifested in long seasons of internal pain, at times almost agonising, and latterly almost incessant. Cancer in some internal organ has been supposed by some; a peculiar form of neuralgia by others. That the king was an almost constant martyr to pain during many years, is the one fact which is beyond doubt.

court, tell us something of the secret of his life. Gifted, no doubt, with rare powers of memory, the king never lost a moment; every hour that he could snatch from his ordinary kingly duties he filled with some well-chosen study. The book was usually read aloud to him by one of his scholar courtiers or chaplain; sometimes it was carefully marked for him to read himself. Not a moment of those precious years of "stillness" was ever wasted, save when his weary malady laid him for a time aside.

A simple device for measuring these fleeting moments, devised by Alfred himself, is described to us by Asser. Six wax candles of equal weight were made to last for twenty-four hours. They were never suffered to go out, one being always kept burning. Each candle was twelve inches long; the inches were accurately marked, every inch thus lasting twenty minutes. As the king on his frequent journeys was often sheltered in a draughty tent, a thin white horn case, transparent as glass, was admirably (*mirabile*, says Asser) made for him, and Alfred was thus enabled with tolerable accuracy to watch the slipping away of every hour, and carefully to measure his precious time.

Student though he was, Alfred never neglected to keep up the necessary pomp and state which belongs to a great monarch, knowing well how impressive was outward magnificence. He travelled, as was the habit of the Saxon kings, from royal residence to royal residence, so as to be constantly present in the various parts of his wide Mercian and Wessex dominions. Most of these villas or palaces were in the midst of the royal estates; a few probably in cities like Winchester or Gloucester. These villas, by his direction, were adorned with gold and silver, and halls after the manner of his northern ancestors were constructed of wood and stone with rare skill. Goldsmiths and cunning workers of precious ornaments were welcome at his court. Their beautiful craft, we are told, was encouraged by the king. We read of his delight in arraying his grandson, prince Athelstan, when a child, with a purple cloak and jewelled belt, and gold-hilted sword. One remarkable example of the goldsmith's craft in the days of Alfred we still possess. Some two hundred years ago, in Somerset, near the river Parrett, not very far from the Isle of Athelney—the last refuge of the king and his family before the supreme effort which resulted in the victory of Ethandune—was found a beautiful jewel consisting of a polished oval crystal, two inches long, inlaid with green and yellow mosaic representing a figure sitting, holding in each hand a lily. The enamelled crystal is set in beaten gold, admirably worked; and on the setting are engraved the words, "Alfred had me wrought." This priceless relic is preserved in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford.

We have dwelt at some length in the next chapter, as belonging especially to our own story, on Alfred's care and pains in the matter of building up again the ruined walls of the English church. Outside religious matters, and the things which immediately influence them, we can only make brief allusions, but it must not be supposed that the restoration of the church, her enthusiasms and her solemn order, her laws, and, above all, her

learning, occupied to the exclusion of other kingly duties, the mind and heart of Alfred. We have seen him in that weary warfare with the Danes, which occupied the early years of the great reign, playing the part of a brave soldier and a skilled strategist, never despairing even in days when all seemed lost. We have traced that troubled life, filled with ceaseless fighting up to the glorious victory at Ethandune, where he won the independence of half of England and the overlordship of a still larger division of his native land. And when at length some years of "stillness" at last were his, among his many works for England was the creation of a standing army and of a permanent fleet.

Photo: H. W. Taunt, Oxford.

ALFRED'S JEWEL, ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM, OXFORD.

It is in Alfred's reign, too, that we find any mention of the first formal "Budget." It is true that most of the more costly national expenses were defrayed by local and individual contributions. For instance, each man-at-arms was bound to serve for a time without pay, and had to provide his own armour and weapons; and the walls and fortifications of towns were maintained by local payments. Yet in the new arrangements for the small standing army and fleet, much of the expense naturally fell on the king. The royal revenue arising from estates and other sources was very considerable, and this sum Alfred formally divided into two portions. The one he applied to worldly expenses, the other to spiritual needs. The first, then, went to the maintenance of worldly power, to the defrayal of war expenses, the new standing army and the fleet, now kept constantly on a war footing; to the cost and maintenance of his court; to building work—such as for his own royal palaces, which he largely rebuilt and richly adorned; and to defray the cost of the customary gifts to strangers and others who visited and thronged his court. These gifts, often very lavish, to illustrious strangers visiting a friendly court, must have been a serious charge on the royal treasury; they were evidently a prominent feature in the court life of the kings of the north, from whom Alfred was descended, and in his court many

of their ancestral customs were preserved. In the great epic of the "Beowulf," a poem well known in the days of Alfred, the gifts to the hero from the king and queen in the hall of Heorot were many and costly, and are carefully described. Whatever be the exact date of the "redaction" of this poem which we now possess, it is perfectly clear that it gives a vivid and accurate picture of much of the court life of the Scandinavian kings of the sixth and following century.

MONASTIC CHARITY IN SAXON TIMES.

The second portion of the royal revenues was allotted to very different uses—exclusively for ecclesiastical and church purposes. One part was set apart for almsgiving and the poor; one part was given to the new monasteries of Shaftesbury and

Athelney; a third was devoted to education and the purchase of books; the king was specially anxious by degrees to replace the awful destruction of the monastic libraries by the Danes. Books were very rare in Wessex when Alfred began to set his hardly-won kingdom in order. The remaining fourth part of this, the spiritual half of his income, was given to help monasteries at home and abroad.

The great king was scarcely fifty-two years old when that noble life came to an end. "Little by little men came to recognise in Alfred a ruler of higher and nobler stamp than the world had seen. 'I desire,' said the king, 'to leave to the men who come after me a remembrance of me in good works.'" His aim has been more than fulfilled, and his memory has come down to us with a living distinctness through the mists of legend which time gathered round it. The instinct of the people has clung to him with a singular affection. The love which he won a thousand years ago has lingered round his name from that day to this. While every other name of those earlier times "has all but faded from the recollection of Englishmen, that of Alfred remains familiar to every English child."*

Of Alfred's earnestness in religion there is no shadow of doubt; but his extraordinary zeal in the restoration of the well-nigh ruined church in England was no doubt fostered and matured by the circumstances in which his life was cast. Not a century before the victory of Ethandune, which has been fairly called one of the decisive battles of the world, had made him really king of half England, Alfred knew that the island had been one of the chief world-centres of culture and learning and religion. All this—culture and learning and religion, and the beneficial influence which naturally accompanied these things—had almost entirely disappeared; had vanished as though they had never been. *Learning as well as religion had died of the Danes.* We must never be wearied of pressing home this truth, that the Danish Viking was not only a pagan, or not a mere indifferent pagan, but one whose life was vowed to the extirpation of Christianity. The Viking — Northman, Ostman, Dane, by whatever name we call him — was the bitter foe of the religion of Jesus. His work and his wars, which colour with a sombre hue the whole story of the ninth century of our era, was the last and bitterest uprising of heathenism against Christianity. For a sad season it even seemed probable that it would win the day. But the Master willed it otherwise; and the great instrument of His Providence, the captain of His host whom He raised up to roll back for ever the advancing tide of paganism, was our English hero-king, Alfred the Great.

* Green: "Conquest," iv.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALFRED'S WORK FOR THE ENGLISH CHURCH AND ENGLISH LITERATURE.

The Ruined Church of England—Its Ignorance as Alfred found it—His Fellow-workers—Asser his Biographer—Alfred's Laws—Limitations of His Realm—Rapid Reorganisation of the Church therein—A Restored Episcopate—Scholastic Establishments—Elevation of the Religious Ideal—Attempts to Restore Monasticism, and their partial Failure—Alfred's Relations with Rome—His Estimate of Education and an Educated Clergy—His own Early Training and Education—Influence of the Saxon Poetry upon his Mind—Himself Becomes a Scholar—And an Author—His Works and Marvellous Industry—The Saxon Chronicle—Alfred the Initiator of Modern Literature—St. Neot.

WHEN, in 901, Alfred entered into his rest, at the comparatively early age of fifty-two, it was a very different England from the country he had saved from the conquering Dane at the peace of Wedmore in 878. It was but a period of some twenty-two years, and this short period was, as we have seen, so broken by wars and treachery that only about fifteen years of quiet can be fairly counted. As regards the military power, the security, the commercial prosperity and wealth of England at the period of Alfred's death, we must content ourselves with the very brief summary in the preceding chapter; our own task concerns the Church of England, and of it we are now especially to speak.

In the year 878, then, enthusiasm, order, learning, had all vanished from the church in Alfred's realm. The monasteries had well-nigh all disappeared; the abbeys were mostly mere heaps of charred and blackened ruins; the remnants of the clergy and monks were utterly dispirited; with scarcely an exception, they were devoid of all learning; there was but a scant store of books, for the libraries were well-nigh entirely destroyed; and no one missed them, for few, if any, could read them. The knowledge of Latin, once so familiar a tongue to priest and monk, and even to nun, had vanished from the land in many places. Pagan rites were gradually superseding Christian services.

Bede had died in his loved cell at Jarrow in 735, and the peace of Wedmore was less than a century and a half later; but the change which had in that period passed over England was so tremendous, that the historian, when he attempts to tell the true story, feels that he may be charged with exaggeration. For well-nigh half a century after Bede's death, England, both in its northern and southern divisions, had been one of the chief places of education; perhaps the chiefest literary centre of Europe. Alcuin, "the disciple of York" and the minister of Charlemagne, had sought in England, and found in great numbers there, books and scholars to assist in the widespread literary and educational work of the all-powerful Frankish emperor. All this splendid development of literature had been the work, we must remember, well-nigh entirely of the Church of England; for, with rare exceptions, the scholar, the teacher, the writer of

poetry or of prose, was an ecclesiastic. But when Alfred, in the year 878, looked out over his liberated but desolated realm, it had all disappeared—monk and nun, books and literature, had vanished like a dream. In the north of England, monastery and nunnery and school had been really annihilated, while in the midlands and the south (Wessex)—his own kingdom—the few of them that yet remained had quite ceased to be homes of learning and education. *The very priests of the Church of England* —a sorry remnant —*had positively* (Alfred tells us so himself) *ceased even to be able to read their books.*

PORTION OF SAXON WORK IN SHERBORNE ABBEY.
(*Said to be contemporary with Aldhelm.*)

This was the state of things in the apparently dying church of 878. In 901 the churches had been rebuilt; the monasteries in many cases had been restored; schools had been organised in various centres; libraries had been established; a great and flourishing vernacular literature had sprung into existence; a band of real scholars, able, practical men, as well as profound students, with the English king as their patron and director, had set themselves to reform, to rebuild, to reorganise the whole ecclesiastical system. Latin once more was studied, and had become a favourite tongue to many. Hand-in-hand with the state, the Church of England recommenced its beneficent career of power and influence, the centre of education and of all other works designed for the true welfare of the people.

Religion, as has been well said, was the groundwork of Alfred's character. Thus, while he laboured as perhaps no sovereign ever laboured before, to ensure a certain measure of security for his people in those restless war-loving times, by the creation of a standing army and the organisation of a regular fleet of armed ships; while he placed the administration of justice on a new and nobler footing; while he laboured incessantly to secure the priceless advantages of education for all sorts and conditions of men; his *heart* was ever fixed upon religion. His writings which have come down to us tell us this: that what he specially longed for was to restore the Church of England to its old position of influence among the people. Without a powerful church, at once devoted and learned, Alfred felt that all efforts to

make his people free and great and strong would prove utterly abortive.

His first care was to provide men who shared his lofty views on the paramount necessity for a strong church in a strong state; for a church which could guide and influence, which could inspire men with high aims and a noble purpose. And few of such men, alas! could be found in his native Wessex. In Canterbury, for a long period no really great and devoted prelate had sat in the honoured seat of Augustine. Its records tell us of no illustrious church leader like Theodore; its school, once so deservedly famous, had produced no teacher as a successor to the scholar Hadrian, Theodore's friend and wise counsellor. Nowhere in his own Wessex could the king find a man whom he could trust to carry out his noble projects for the restoration of the Church of England to its old position of holy influence. Ethelred, archbishop at the date of the peace of Wedmore, and who lived until the year 889, was a loyal churchman and a good man, but was no efficient counsellor of the great king; no born leader of men in such a period of reconstruction and reformation, when a new foundation had to be again promptly laid.

SHERBORNE ABBEY AT PRESENT TIME.

Alfred was, however, more than simply king of Wessex; he was king of Mercia too, the formally acknowledged sovereign of the largest portion of central England, since the last Mercian king Burrhed, flying from the conquering Danes, had died a

pilgrim in Rome. The Danes only occupied the eastern division of Mercia ; the central and west portion had become an integral part of Alfred's realm from the date of the peace of Wedmore. Mercia, in those western districts which fell to Alfred's share, had been less harried by the Vikings than any other part of England; and in Worcester, under its energetic bishop Werfrith, a remnant of the old learning and teaching seems to have been preserved even in the most gloomy period of the Viking invasion. It was from Mercia that Alfred chose his principal advisers in his work for the regeneration of the Church of England. Among these advisers the names are preserved of Werfrith, the bishop of Worcester ; of Athelstan and Werwulf, who were attached closely to his person as his chaplains; and later, Plegmund, whom he placed in Canterbury when Ethelred the archbishop died in 890.

But for scholars for the work he designed the church to carry on, the king had to go beyond the limits of England, so utterly had all learning died out of the realm. From the famous monastery of St. Bertin in St. Omer, he invited the monk Grimbald to preside over the new religious house which he founded in his royal city of Winchester. Grimbald was a musician and singer; a most valuable acquisition in the constitution of a monastic establishment, where many services were kept up, and where variety and change were absolutely needful. Grimbald, too, was noted for his knowledge of that perfect form of ecclesiastical discipline practised in the greater Benedictine societies. Another monk of high repute, John, apparently from the well-known Westphalian monastery of Corbey, was brought over to assist in the organisation of the new West-Saxon and Mercian religious communities, and in the reformation of the few which yet remained. These brought with them many companions to aid them in restoring the ancient discipline and practices.

The best-known, however, of all the king's coadjutors was the author of the "Biography of Alfred," whence most of what we know concerning the inner life, the hopes and wishes of the great king, is derived. Asser the learned, the devoted friend of Alfred during the greater part of his reign which followed the peace of Wedmore, was a Welsh ecclesiastic, a monk of St. David's, of great repute. He tells the story himself, how the king sent for him from his secluded home in the far distant western border of Britain, the monastery of St. David's. After his long journey he came to the king's house called Dene, in Sussex, where Alfred asked him to leave for his sake all that he had on the western side of the Severn, promising to recompense him with yet greater possessions. But Asser could not give up his Welsh home altogether—the British scholar tells his life-story very vividly and simply—and he rode back again to his distant home. After promising Alfred soon to return, he sickened of a dangerous fever, and was a sufferer for twelve months and a week, and had little hope of life. He describes how Alfred sent to him during his long sickness to ask why he had never been again to see him as he had promised. In the end he agreed to spend half his time in the Wessex country, and the other half in Wales.

Asser's devotion to the king's service never flagged; he remained one of the chief ministers of the reign. His work lay especially in the organisation of monasteries and schools. Late in his career—probably only in the first year of Alfred's son and successor, Edward—he became bishop of Sherborne, and died in the year 910, nine years after the death of his dear friend and master. But although Asser was only raised late in his busy life to one of the few Anglo-Saxon bishoprics, we hear incidentally of his receiving rich rewards and high honours at different times from his grateful master. The king gave him the charge of Exeter and the western parishes belonging to it in Wessex and Cornwall, an appointment peculiarly fitting for one of the ancient British stock, and trained as a monk in the immemorial traditions of the renowned community of St. David's. On one occasion Alfred, he says, gave him a costly silk pallium, probably the insignia of some high office bestowed upon him; at another time the king presented him with "a man's load of incense," no doubt a precious gift for the use of the many churches in the west, especially entrusted to the care of the favourite minister and adviser. Asser seems also to have been the abbot of two monasteries.

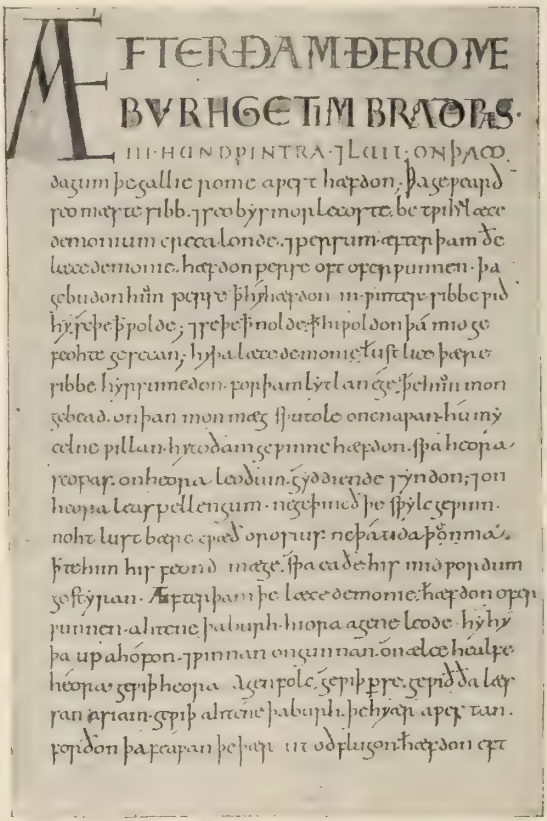
Round the king stood this little group of scholars he had gathered together, who loyally assisted their great master in his work of the regeneration of the ruined land. They, together with him, rescued the Church of England from what seemed a position of hopeless ruin and degradation, and made her once more a commanding and beneficent influence among the people. By English churchmen the names should never be forgotten of Asser, subsequently bishop of Sherborne; Plegmund, archbishop of Canterbury; Werfrith, bishop of Worcester; Grimbald, the monk who refused to be archbishop; and John, the king's mass-priest, or chaplain.

In the laws of Alfred, the intensely religious spirit of the famous king appears in the curious Biblical mould in which these laws were cast. As far as it was possible the old Hebrew code, both in language and spirit, was introduced by Alfred into the laws of the Anglo-Saxon people. The vast influence of the church over the minds of great Continental princes like Charlemagne is clearly perceptible in the codes put forth at different times among the Franks. But this religious influence is nowhere so manifest as in the laws of Alfred. Many of these had exclusive reference to the church, its rights and privileges, its vowed servants.

It must be remembered that during the long Danish wars, the land in many districts had fallen under the influence of paganism; the influence of the church was everywhere weakened, in not a few places it had entirely ceased to exist. The great monasteries, the centres of Christian life and teaching, were well-nigh all destroyed. Even in such places as Canterbury, their power and weight counted but very little. Of the bishops, some had disappeared altogether; those who were still acknowledged in the ruined and desolated dioceses, with rare exceptions, were men of little weight and scanty learning. Thus not a few of the ecclesiastical laws of Alfred were directed against disorders,

which were largely owing to the presence and influence of paganism in the land. The performance of pagan rites and witchcraft were made punishable offences.

Punishments were decreed against any profanation of the Sunday or holy days. It would seem as though the observance of Sunday had largely ceased in what was rapidly becoming pagan England. Considerable and special privileges were given in these laws to the persons of ecclesiastics. Every offence against their individual dignity was rigorously punished. Those were rough days, yet anyone who presumed to fight in the sight of the bishop or archbishop was fined a great sum. Robbery of church property was punished by the infliction of a double fine, and, in addition, by the terrible penalty of the loss of a hand! The privileges of sanctuary in the case of criminals and fugitives from justice were carefully defined, and every detail of the treatment of these sheltered persons when in sanctuary was carefully provided for. This, of course, in a country which has narrowly escaped a return to paganism, placed the Christian church in a peculiar position of sanctity in the eyes of the people.

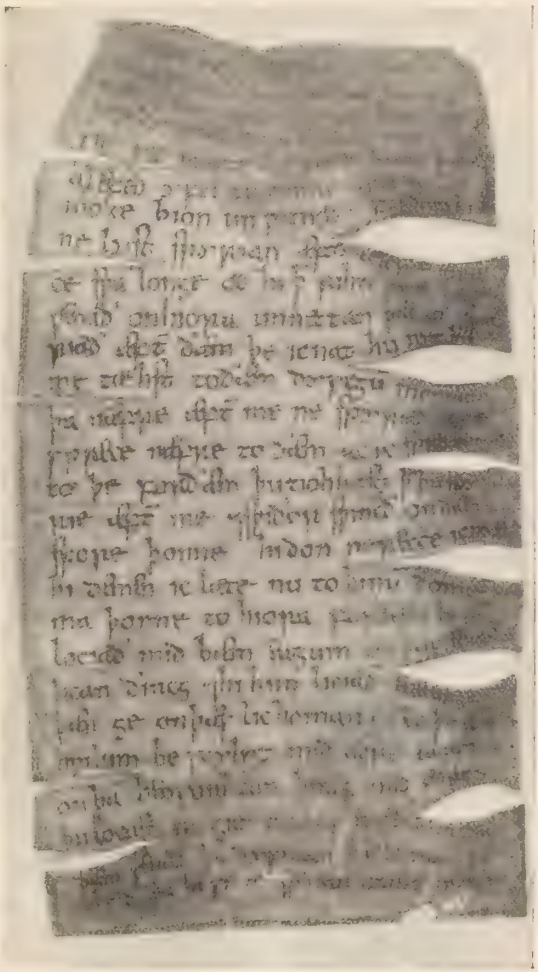


PAGE FROM AN ELEVENTH CENTURY COPY OF KING ALFRED'S TRANSLATION OF OROSIUS' "COMPENDIOUS HISTORY OF THE WORLD."

(*British Museum Cott. MS. Tiberius B. 1 f.* 42.)

But, alas! Alfred's realm was not England as we understand the term. The sharp, clear-cut statement of the English Chronicle, in its reference to the year 886, eight years after the peace of Wedmore, in a few words sums up the situation. The Engles (or Angles) dwelt in Northumbria and Deira, from the lowlands of Scotland to the hills of Derbyshire; they occupied Lincolnshire and the broad Fen country; theirs, too, were the eastern counties from the shores of the Wash to the banks of the Thames. Mercia, too, was Engle; it stretched, did this great dominion of mid-Britain, from the Fen lands to the Welsh mountain districts. The

south Yorkshire boundaries may be said roughly to have been its northern frontier. In the south, the Engles of Mercia reached to the Hwiccian country now roughly Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, and Warwickshire. As the Chronicle says, "All the Angelcyn" (Engles) "turned to Alfred, save those who were under bondage to Danish men." But this was no slight exception. The Angelcyn in bondage to Danish men were the inhabitants of the larger half of England. The pagan Viking had done his work but too well and thoroughly. So completely was Christianity rooted out of the north of England, that the great kingdom of Northumbria is said to have positively remained without a monastic house to the verge of the Norman conquest. In the Fen lands the utter destruction of the great abbeys has been already related, and with the burning of abbeys such as Peterborough and Crowland, Bardney and Ely—renowned centres of Christian teaching and popular homes of learning—the fate of Christianity in this wild, strange country of swamp and fen, with difficulty won by the patient industry of the monk settlers, was sealed.



PAGE FROM A TENTH CENTURY COPY OF KING ALFRED'S TRANSLATION OF BOETHIUS.
(*British Museum Cott. MS. Otho. A.* vi. *f.* 104.)

In Mid-Britain, too, the religion of the Crucified seemed doomed. The sees of Dunwich and Lindsey disappeared; they were henceforth unneeded, for there was no church to watch over and to tend. At Lichfield the regular succession of bishops became broken and irregular. The end here, in Mid-England, seemed not far distant. In York alone, out of northern, middle, and eastern England, was the succession unbroken of the prelates who sat in the seat of Paulinus, and of the

great archbishops who helped to make the school of York famous throughout the western world. There, where the Danish king had fixed his seat of government, the chief priest of the conquered Engle race was permitted to live on ; so the list of archbishops of York in these sad times remains entire. But it is but a list of shadowy names. There is absolutely no history, for the church of Northumbria had virtually ceased to exist.

Only in the south of England—in Wessex and the Mercia west of Watling Street, in Kent, and the district generally known as the home counties round London, a later acquisition of Alfred—could the work of the king be carried out. Only in these districts, rescued from the hands of the pagan Danes, was the church built up again. Christianity in East Anglia, ruled over by the Danish convert Guthrun, for many years was but a feeble influence in the land, and shared but little in the great church revival of the south and west. Yet although confined to the kingdoms of Wessex and western Mercia, the Church of England as reconstituted by Alfred grew into power and influence with great rapidity, and was soon again reckoned in learning and in piety a leading church in the west of Europe. It endured, too ; and, as we shall see, gradually though slowly extended its influence northward and eastward in the island. That Alfred in the face of such unparalleled difficulties could have re-laid so well the foundations of the Church of England is, perhaps, the most surprising fact and successful effort in her long and marvellous story.

Briefly, what Alfred accomplished was as follows. He placed at the head of ecclesiastical affairs a learned episcopate ; but even here he encountered serious difficulties. To find men capable, according to his ideas of governing and organising, he had to seek strangers ; and his chief advisers in church matters were drawn, not from his own Wessex, but from Mercia, Wales, and even from the continent of Europe, as we have already related. So difficult was it for him to find learned men for the chief posts in the church, that when he died several sees were left without bishops, owing to his inability to find scholars capable of filling these high and difficult positions.

Many schools were established, some in connection with monastic establishments, some independent of these communities. Dean Hook even considers* that to Alfred's foundations the English system of public-school education must be traced. Alfred desired that every youth in England who had wealth enough should be taught to read English, and afterwards, if they hoped to be promoted to a higher rank, should be instructed in Latin. This last acquirement seems especially to have referred to those who intended to devote themselves to the service of the church. He set up a special school for the instruction of young nobles, in imitation of a similar institution of Charlemagne, in his own court. Books were unfortunately very rare in England at this period. The magnificent libraries which had been one of the chief glories of England had been well-nigh destroyed ; but without doubt some of the precious manuscripts from that of York had been preserved, and when it became known

* "Lives of the Archbishops."

that Alfred welcomed to his court all who could bring him a book to add to the library of Winchester, the remnants of literature left at York would be carried southward. It was thus probably that the text of many of the poems of Cædmon and Cynewulf, unknown before, save as fragmentary lilts recited by wandering songmen, were brought to Wessex and the south. These, put into the Wessex dialect, soon became very popular.* Several other famous works recovered by Alfred were rendered into English. The great king set the example by turning into English himself the story of Bede for the use of his people. Lives of saints, such as Adamnan's Columba, were put into an English form. Many treatises and works on theology were also translated. English prose may be said to have dated its rise from this impulse given to it by Alfred, as is more fully described a little further on.

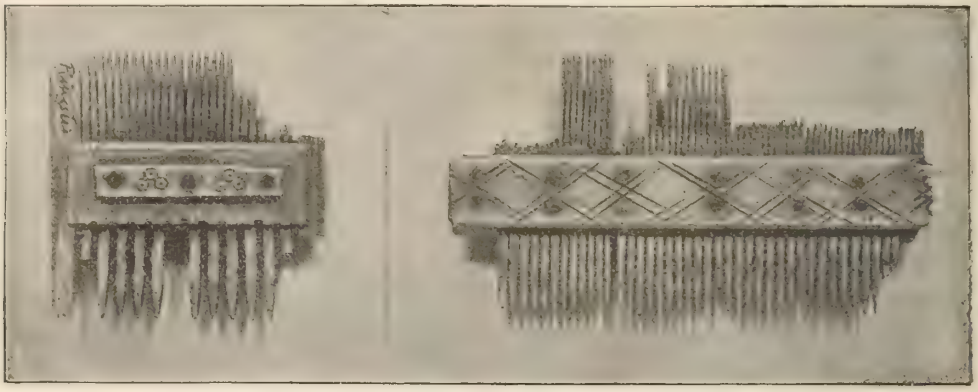
The king's own words in his preface to the pastoral book of Pope Gregory the Great vividly and simply set forth what was in his mind when he set the noble example of giving an English literature to his people. "When I remembered how the knowledge of Latin had decayed throughout England, I began, among other various and manifold troubles of this kingdom, to translate into English the book which is called in the Latin *Pastoralis*, and in English, Shepherd's Book, sometimes word by word, and sometimes according to the sense, as I had learnt it from Plegmund, my archbishop, and Asser, my bishop, and Grimbald, my mass-priest, and John, my mass-priest; and when I had learnt it, as I could best understand it, I translated it into English."

The inner life of the church was purified and invigorated by an elaborate code of church laws specially framed for its guidance and regulation; while the same code guarded and re-affirmed its dignity and privileges. Above all, the king raised the whole conception of the work of the church and her ministers. His ideal was perhaps too lofty for ordinary men, and only in a few noble instances was attained; but his idea of the work and office of the church in relation to the state, his own labours and high example, completely changed the character of the dispirited and well-nigh hopeless church, which existed, but scarcely influenced the life of the harassed English people, in the disastrous period which preceded the fight at Ethandune. When Alfred died the Church of England had risen from its ruins; it had once more won the respect of foreign nations, and was playing an important and most influential part in the life and hopes of Englishmen.

One weighty department of Alfred's church work, in which he was by no means so successful, must be specially alluded to. In the story of Christianity in England during the seventh and eighth centuries, the centre of well-nigh all church life and learning must be sought and found in the monasteries and nunneries which were so plentifully scattered over the land, notably in the northern part of the kingdom and in the Fen country; but even in Wessex, where monasticism was less influential, there were not a few great and famous religious and educational houses. The greater number

* Compare remarks of Stopford Brooke in "Early English Literature."

of these had disappeared in the successive storms of the long-drawn-out Danish wars. more devout had fled to the woods and wilds, there to live as hermits; the more



VIKING COMBS FOUND IN DENMARK (*British Museum*).

The few which remained, such as, for instance, Malmesbury, Glastonbury, and Canterbury, had sadly fallen away from the ancient discipline. Utterly illiterate, we find them living without any definite rule. Canterbury, the mother church of England, the home of the school of Hadrian and Theodore, scarcely second in European repute to that of York, had been "twice sacked and almost deserted. Those who could earn a livelihood elsewhere were unwilling to remain in a position so liable to be attacked; the canons of the cathedral had taken their departure, and archbishop Ceolnoth, who died in 870, had been obliged to employ in the services of his deserted church the secular clergy who were detained in the city to protect or provide for their wives and families. Archbishop Ethelred, who succeeded Ceolnoth at Canterbury the year before Alfred's accession, desired to expel these (the secular clergy), and to supply their places with monks; but monks to undertake the duty he could not find. The active-minded and patriotic had exchanged the convent for the camp, or, as in the case of St. Augustine's (the once famous monastery and school of Canterbury), converted their monastery into a fortress, determined from behind stone walls to defend their relics from profanation, and the aged and infirm of their brethren from violence." *

Alfred, in his far-reaching designs for the rebuilding of the Church of England, was earnestly desirous for the restoration and rehabilitation of the religious houses. For this object we have seen that his "Budget" carefully set apart a portion of his yearly revenue. He established monasteries at Athelney and Winchester; nunneries at Shaftesbury and Hyde acknowledged the great king as their founder. Of the house at Shaftesbury the king's second daughter, Elswitha, became the abbess, and many noble ladies joined the princess there. Ethelfleda, another and very famous daughter of Alfred,

* Dr. Hook: "Lives of the Archbishops."

usually known as "Lady of the Mercians," the wife of Alfred's Mercian viceroy or earl of the Mercians, Ethelred, founded the priory of St. Oswald under the walls of Gloucester, endowed it with costly gifts, and placed there the relics of the sainted martyr, king Oswald. Its picturesque ruins are still among the glories of Gloucester, and one ancient baluster, among the crumbling relics of the fair priory belonging to a later age, is still shown as undoubtedly a bit of the early work of Alfred's daughter, Ethelfleda. Alfred's queen, Elswitha, also dedicated at Winchester a nunnery to the Blessed Virgin, "for her soul's salvation," where after the death of her husband she might end her days.

Yet, in spite of all this zeal and careful work, Alfred's efforts to restore monasticism were only partially successful. In Northumbria, of course, he had no influence; north of the Humber, England was purely Danish. In the eastern counties his power was greater, but he could do little even there to help the church. The ruler of East Anglia, Guthrun-Athelstan, the baptised Dane, to the day of his death in the year 890, was a typical Viking chief rather than a Christian prince. We hear of him rather as the fierce pirate-chief leading successful raids in Frank-land, than as a wise and peace-loving Christian ruler of East Anglia. In Wessex and western Mercia, as we have seen, the restoration of monasticism entered largely into Alfred's designs for rebuilding the ruined church. But even there he was sadly disappointed. In and around Worcester, where the learned and pious Werfrith was bishop, a few religious houses seem to have taken firm root. But in Wessex, in the days of Alfred, the revival of monasticism was unpopular, and made no real way. In the abbey of Athelney, founded by the king as a thank-offering for the great deliverance from the Danes which had begun in the Somersetshire marshes, he could persuade no noble or even free West-Saxon to become a monk, and the community was made up of strangers from the Continent.

PILLOW STONE FOUND IN A GRAVE AT HARTLEPOOL, SUPPORTING THE HEAD OF THE PERSON NAMED ON THE STONE, A.D. 700 OR LATER.

We may perhaps trace here, even at this early period, the general recoil of the English mind, when the first attraction of contrast with paganism had disappeared, from the vowed celibate system. At all events, although in Mercia and in Wessex old religious houses were restored, and new ones built and endowed for communities of both sexes, this part of Alfred's church work was, on the whole, the least successful of all the noble strivings of this true toiler for God.

As Alfred may be considered to have refounded the Church of England, and raised it once again from its ruined condition to a position of influence and power in the land, it will be interesting to inquire what were the relations between this great and devoted churchman and Rome ; to see whether the pretensions of Rome to supreme authority, advanced subsequently at a period not long after this time, and in a considerable measure then acceded to by the Church of England, were acknowledged by the first real king of England, to whom that church owes so vast a debt of gratitude.

From the time of Augustine in the last years of the sixth century, Rome, for a considerable period, largely owing to the peculiar circumstances of Augustine's mission, claimed the right of interference in the affairs of the church in the island. We have seen how, owing to the successful work of the Celtic missionaries, who had no commission from Rome, the influence of the great and masterful Roman see for many years counted but little in the Celtic churches and daughter-churches of Northumbria. Then, though travelling different roads, Theodore of Canterbury and Wilfrid of York again accustomed our English church to look to Rome as the great centre of church life and influence, and as the supreme arbiter in case of disputes ; as the fountain whence should issue at least the sanction to all appointments to the chief places in the ecclesiastical hierarchy ; as the final court in all important questions of doctrine or ritual. The influence and authority of Rome in England, until the Vikings had well-nigh put an end to Christianity in the island, was, however, an undefined and general one, though none the less real. But the period of Rome's undefined claims to the obedience of the churches of western Christendom was coming to an end.

Only some twenty years before the fight at Ethandune and the subsequent peace of Wedmore made Alfred a king indeed, had the famous forgery of the False Decretals been formally accepted as authentic by Pope Nicholas I., who died in 867. Before these "False Decretals" took their authoritative place in Latin Christendom, the decretals, or letters, or edicts of the bishops of Rome, to which the popes could refer as precedents, as collected by Dionysius, only commenced with Pope Siricius, near *the end of the fourth century*. The records of the Councils were all preserved under the name of Isidore of Seville. On a sudden appeared a new collection of documents containing, besides decrees of certain unauthentic Councils, letters and decrees of the twenty oldest popes and bishops of Rome, reaching from Clement of Rome, *in the first century* of the Christian era, or positively from Apostolic times. These also bore the name of

Isidore as the original collector. In these documents the assertion appears and reappears that the Church of Rome was directly constituted head over all other churches by our Lord Himself; and it is alleged that the episcopal chair of St. Peter, for the sake of convenience, was transferred from Antioch to Rome. In these marvellous documents, the Popes of Rome appear from the first the guardians and legislators of the faith throughout the world.

There is much that is curious and interesting in these False Decretals, but they abound in anachronisms and in confusion in the order of events. They are now generally given up, and are acknowledged to be the work of some mistakenly zealous canonist in the ninth century. They were probably completed towards the end of the first half of the ninth century, at Mainz. Pope Nicholas I., who reigned 858 to 867, was the first pope who formally referred to these "Decretals" as authentic and authoritative documents; but from his days they formed the basis of the enormous and arrogant pretensions of the Roman see to a sovereign and absolute rule over all other churches. From the middle of the ninth century, until the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the authority of these strange forgeries was almost unquestioned.

We shall before long find these pretensions, largely based on the False Decretals above referred to, advanced in England; but up to the days of Alfred the authority claimed by Rome was, as we have here stated, somewhat uncertain and vague. It will be remembered how, during the supremacy of king Offa of Mercia, when that sovereign determined to establish the archbishopric of Lichfield at the Synod of Cealchythe or Calcuith, held in 785, some hundred years before the reign of Alfred, Pope Hadrian I. sent two legates from Rome to be present at the synod, hoping thus to establish a precedent for the appearance of legates from the see of Rome at synods of the Church of England. But if this was in reality Pope Hadrian's design, it failed, for this was the only recorded presence of such Roman legates at any council of the Anglo-Saxon church. Some of the solemn decisions of Rome in the case of Wilfrid, bishop of York, in the seventh century, were carried out, but not all. The pall, in the case of the archbishops, was always conferred by Rome; but with this exception, there was little regular interference with England on the part of the Italian see. Indeed, the close and intimate connection between England and Rome seems rather owing to the deep veneration which the princes who ruled in England seem ever to have felt for the sacred city and her immemorial traditions, than to any direct claim to obedience advanced by the Popes. The pilgrimages from England to Rome were constant. Alfred himself in early youth visited Rome, in company with his father, king Ethelwulf; and the impressions which he received on the occasion of that visit were never effaced. After he had become really king in England we read of costly gifts being interchanged between Alfred and the Pope, whom evidently the great English king looked up to as the centre of Christianity; with whom he wished to live in close and intimate communion; and to whom he clearly looked as the supreme arbiter in matters of faith, even acknow-

ledging his over-lordship in the church; for Alfred seems to have sent money and gifts to the Roman prelate every year.

But here the influence and supremacy of Rome over the English church apparently ceased. Alfred was evidently supreme in ecclesiastical matters in his own kingdom. We read, for instance, of his issuing the famous *Pastoral* in his own name, referring to Plegmund as "my archbishop." He also undertook, in right of his royal power, to admonish his bishops. We read of no reference to Rome in any ecclesiastical matters connected with England. The king appointed his own nominees to the vacant sees, and (apparently because he could not find sufficient men of learning) positively allowed several sees to remain vacant. This was the case at Alfred's death. We may therefore conclude that the Church of England, as restored by Alfred, was absolutely independent of the Roman see, although the most intimate relations were ever maintained between king Alfred and the Pope.

Alfred was an indefatigable scholar and student; but his passion for study was enormously stimulated by his persuasion that England could only rise from its present fallen and ruined condition if closely united to the church, and that the church, to do its duty, must be a community learned and highly cultured. He was intensely convinced that the church, before it could carry out its high and beneficial mission, must possess all the necessary material for educating the people—varied learning in its bishops, monks, and priests, schools and libraries. This conviction of the king was the groundwork of all his carefully matured plans for the restoration of church life.

This was the secret of Alfred's love, zeal, and successful work for the Church of England. The king felt that the combat was not alone between gallant and devoted patriots fighting against the Northern pirates for the independence of their lands and homes, but between the religion of Jesus and the religion of Woden and Thor, the idol-deities of Scandinavia. He was well aware that the memory of Ethandune, glorious victory though it was, would soon be wiped out, unless he could set up and establish a great Christian England as a bulwark against the pagan North. So while he neglected nothing which could strengthen his country as a great military and naval power, his real work, the work upon which his heart was fixed, was to build up a devoted and earnest, a learned and cultured church in England; and in the successful prosecution of this noble and patriotic work must be sought and found his true title to honour, his best title to the love and veneration which, halo-like, has encircled Alfred's head for a thousand storied years.

There was little learning at the court of his father, Ethelwulf. Books were very scarce, and men who could read them scarcer still. The great king tells us himself in later days, that in his youth, "when he had the age and ability to learn, he could find no masters." Asser, his faithful friend and biographer, relates that he remained illiterate till he was twelve years old or more. What he learnt in the days of his youth was gathered from the

PREACHER SINGING IN THE HIGHWAY (*p.* 399).

lips of the song-men in the royal mead-hall, who in the eveningtide would sing to his father and his warrior thanes the grand old English songs. This was the only literature which seems to have been popular in those days of war and disaster. But these old lilts were graven on the boy's heart, and were never forgotten; they begat in him that enduring love for poetry which lived in him all the days of his stirring work-filled life, and helped not a little to shape and mould his singularly winning character.

No land had such a store of songs as England. It requires no stretch of fancy to picture the boy Alfred listening while the Widsith, or wandering song-man, chanted to king and thane the story of Beowulf, the god-descended hero, who fought and vanquished monsters, enemies of man, but who lived in friendship with all heroic natures. The famous hall of Heorot, the king and queen and chieftains who were delivered from the foul fiend by Beowulf's valour, resembled closely the royal hall, and those who sat therein with his father, whom Alfred remembered so well. The friends with whom Beowulf fought were well represented by those wicked pirate Vikings who were desolating England. The deeds of gallant daring of which, at so early an age, Alfred was the hero, we may well suppose were largely inspired by such stirring songs. Nor were the splendid and unselfish acts of the great Norse hero all that the boy heard in these evening pass-times. Strange and moving recitals belonging to the Christian story, from the inspired poets of the great Northumbrian school, were no doubt often the themes of the song-men who helped king Ethelwulf and his thanes to wile away the long winter evenings of their war-wearied days. He would listen with rapt attention while the Widsith, the wandering song-man, would open his word-hoard and sing to king and thane the glorious "Dream of the Rood" of Cynewulf, or the great poem of "The Christ."

Religion was painted in these strange weird poems, which resemble nothing else that has ever been written since, with a winning attractiveness to men engaged in a deadly warfare for home and hearth. The sacrifice of the Son of God, with its undreamed-of self-devotion—so brave, so touching, so tender, so utterly unselfish—this was a god surely worth fighting for, dying for! We read now the wild and passionate poems of Cynewulf and his school with cold and critical eyes, mostly in the form of a more or less literal translation, and we are quite unable to conceive the impression these lilts must have made on the hearts of men engaged in that awful war-game with the seemingly countless hordes of sea-pirates, when the stakes included religion and law, home and hearth, wife and child. Songs and chanted recitations, in those sad times, enormously influenced men's hearts. "Heroes in the midst of battle sang as they advanced, like Harold Hardrada at Stamford Bridge, or Taillefer, the minstrel of duke William, who sang the song of Rollo before the Norman host at Hastings. Vikings, as they drove their ships through the gale or stormed a town on the river, shouted their hymn of defiance to the sea, or their praises of their ship. Warriors chanted their deeds of the day in the hall at night, as Woden's chosen did in Valhalla. The old chiefs sang the

glory of their youth—their very swords and spears were thought to sing. Then the wanderer who came into the hall to claim hospitality sang his stave of thanks, or versed for the chief in the high seat who he was. The king himself often broke in with his tale, and seized the harp, as Hrothgar did in Heorot, in the old Norse saga of Beowulf. Even eloquent Christian preachers like Aldhelm sang ancient songs in the public ways to draw people round them. In the women's chambers also the old lays were sung. Alfred, we are told, sang the ballads of his people at his mother's knee. In the evening recitals, the player beat his harp in time with the thoughts and images of his songs; his voice rang out the alliterated words and accented syllables of the verses; gesture accompanied and exalted the things described; the listeners often joined in, moved to excitement, and the whole chorus of voices filled the hall and the monastery." *

From such impassioned instructors the young Alfred, who for years had no other tutors, drew the inspiration which made him the hero-king, the desperate patriot-warrior of a hundred deadly fights with the enemies of his country. But they taught him other things than war. It was from the religious songs of Cynewulf that the future rebuilder of the Church of England perhaps first learned the story of Christianity. Where, for instance, in the prose or poetry of any race is a grander, more impressive, or more soul-inspiring conception to be found than the theme of the Holy Rood in the "Christ" of Cynewulf or in his "Dream of the Rood," where "the cross standing with its foot on Sion's hill, rises till its top strikes the sky? All the assembled hosts look upon it. Nor is it difficult to see, for by its light all things are seen. The sun is gone, it shines instead of the sun; it is the brightest of all beacons; all shade is banished by its brilliance. From head to foot it is red, wet with the blood of the King of Heaven. Christ is seen by all the multitude of good and evil crucified upon it. The good see it, and it brings brightness to their souls. The evil see it for their torment."

The image of the towering tree bearing the Crucified was a favourite one. Often, probably, had the boy Alfred heard it, in these rapt assemblies of the royal mead-hall—now "as the mighty Rood illuminating with its ruddy light the heavens and earth, and all the hosts of angels and of men summoned from their graves to judgment; now the same tree shining through a golden light, and over-wrought like a Rood at Ripon or Hexham with jewelled lines of ornament, or veiled in a crimson mist and streaming with blood—the strange tree, alive and suffering with every pang of the great Sufferer, shivering through every vein of it when Christ, the young hero, clasped it round, and mourning when He lay beneath, and longing to fall on and crush His foes, and conscious all the while that on it, as on a field of battle, Death and Hell were conquered." In one passage of extraordinary power and beauty in "The Christ," the Redeemer is painted turning to the great Rood—as a Roman Catholic preacher now and again turns to the Crucifix—and pointing to Himself hanging there, cries to the

* "Early English Literature" (Stopford Brooke).

vast host of the lost, "See now the deadly wounds which men once made upon my palms, and also on my feet, by which I hung fastened most bitterly. Here, too, mayest thou look on the wound, blood-streaming on my side. O, how uneven between us two the reckoning! Why didst thou forsake the glorious life I bought for thee through love? Give me back thy life which I gave thee. Why hast thou crucified me worse upon the rood of thine hands than when of old I hung upon that tree?" *

The extraordinary influence which these early recitations had upon the life of Alfred is dwelt upon with much insistence by all those who have given us studies† of his life—that life so all-important to the history of our English church. Asser, his contemporary and friend, especially mentions these Saxon poems, and how he loved them. Long after the king became himself a great scholar, and deeply read in all kinds of literature, these national songs kept their hold upon him. He had learned many of them by heart; he took care that they should form part of his children's training.

As illustrative of Alfred's early love for poetry, Asser tells a well-known story of his young step-mother, Judith, the daughter of Charles the Bald of France, whom his father, Ethelwulf, married as he returned home from his Roman pilgrimage. "One day," says the old chronicler to whom we owe so much of our knowledge of the noble Saxon king, "his mother"—Asser, of course, is alluding to his young step-mother, Judith, for his own mother had died some six or more years before the incident in question—"showed Alfred, then a boy about fourteen years old, and his brother a manuscript of the Saxon poetry. The boys were especially attracted by the beautiful illuminations of the book, no doubt one of the treasures which Judith had brought from her old Frankish home, where it had probably originally been in the costly library of her grandfather, Charlemagne. The young queen promised to give the precious volume to the boy who would first learn the contents of the book." Asser repeats the very words of Alfred when Judith made the suggestion: "Will you really give that book to the first of us who can understand and repeat its contents to you?" Judith smiled, and confirmed her first offer. After a time, goes on the story, Alfred came and recited to her the poems of the book, and so won the prize.

But this national poetry, which exercised throughout his life so great an influence on the hero-king, although it was the foundation of the knowledge which he acquired in his later life, and the most probable source of his subsequent devotion to theological studies, was by no means the only study to which, by his example, he gave an overwhelming impulse in the new England he succeeded in making. We have seen how he gathered round him from foreign countries that group of learned and pious men who helped him so loyally and devotedly to restore the religion he prized so highly to his country. "As we were one day sitting in the royal chamber," writes Asser, his most intimate associate and counsellor, "and conversing as was our wont, it chanced

* "Early English Literature." (S. Brooke.)

† See especially Green; Sharon Turner; Pauli.

that I recited to him a passage out of a certain book. After he had listened with fixed attention and expressed great pleasure, the king showed me that little book which he always carried with him, and in which the daily lessons, Psalms and prayers were written, and he asked me to copy the

JUDITH AND THE SONS OF ETHELWULF (*p.* 400).

passage he had been listening to into his book ; but we found there was no room for it, Alfred having filled up every corner with his own notes." The king and his friend then arranged another commonplace-book, into which striking passages might at once be copied, for Asser or another royal secretary were constantly engaged in reading aloud to their master. This book was termed by Alfred his Manual or Enchiridion. The precious manuscript is lost ; only fragments of the work have come down to us through William of Malmesbury, in whose time it was evidently well known. Pauli, in his life of Alfred, says it must have contained, besides a collection of passages from the Latin authors, many notes in the king's own hand, relating to the early history of his people, and probably, too, of his own family. How many of his own thoughts also have been lost with this private book !

We have, however, much of Alfred's own composition still with us ; for in the fourteen or fifteen years of quiet which were given to the king in answer to his prayer, before he passed to that other and profounder rest, the sure heritage of all true servants of the Master, the king became, for

the church and country's sake, a profound scholar and even writer. It is from his own writings that we learn what Alfred did for the church he loved so well, the church he found a ruin and left a stately edifice. Of these works, perhaps the most important were his translations of Boethius' famous "Consolations;" a rendering of the "Pastoral Care" of Pope Gregory the Great; a Saxon version of the Latin "History" of Bede of Jarrow; and a translation of the "Chronicle of the World," by Orosius, the friend of Augustine.

We call them *translations*, and so they were—renderings from the Latin of those old famous Christian scholars, into the familiar Wessex Saxon dialect understood by people over whom Alfred ruled; for the Latin tongue, alas! in the days of Alfred was well-nigh a lost language in England, unread alike by layman or ecclesiastic. They were, however, far more than mere translations; masses of fresh matter containing the king's own thoughts and feelings, his views, hopes and ideals, amplify the original text; sometimes entirely suppress and replace it. Alfred occupies so great a position as the founder and reorganiser of the Church of England after its great disaster at the hands of the Danes, that it will be worth while to describe a little in detail these special works, which occupy the place of "manifestoes" of the king to the church, as well as being weighty pieces of literature given in the English tongue for general study and use, to a church from which order and discipline had well-nigh, and learning had entirely vanished.

As to Boethius' "Consolations of Philosophy," the vast popularity of this treatise in the Middle Ages bears witness to its importance and value, and helps to show us why Alfred selected it as the text-book upon which he based the remarkable epitome of his own thoughts and views which accompany his translation. "In the Middle Ages, wherever," writes Pauli, "a newly-formed language was applied to literature, a translation of Boethius' work into the popular dialect was never omitted. We find one in the most ancient form of high-German, in the Provençal, in Norman, and even Chaucer made one when he gave her language to England. Alfred seems to have studied this book above all others."

His "Bede" was a yet more direct appeal to the church for which he was so anxious, and yet so hopeful. The king would have every churchman, lay or cleric, master the thrilling story of the preaching of Christianity to their Northmen ancestors. He would have them study well Bede's pictures of monastery and nunnery—then crowded with devout and earnest men and women. The stirring examples of the devoted Engle missionaries Aidan, Cuthbert, Chad, and others, he would set before the ignorant and somewhat slothful monk or cleric of his time; and thus he hoped to stir them up to emulate—in some faint degree, at least—the noble, generous life led by so many of their fathers in the faith. The story of the glorious works of Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop, and the stately piles which they built in their day, should be a lesson to the men who, with folded inert hands, were content to gaze on the blackened ruins of monastery and abbey which disfigured the desolated England of his generation.

Yet more direct, perhaps, in its influence upon the Church of England, was Alfred's translation of the "Pastoral Care" of Gregory the Great, a work in which the Anglo-Saxon king took peculiar delight. It was especially calculated to awaken a nobler spirit in a church where enthusiasm and self-devotion had in a measure faded away. The emperor Charlemagne and his advisers had already made this "Pastoral Care" the standard of procedure, in their work of reformation among the Frankish churches. It was soon after the selection of Plegmund for the archbishopric of Canterbury, in 890, that this book was put out by the king. He was evidently assisted by Plegmund; but much of the work was done by Alfred, and the admirable preface, already referred to, was by the king's own hand. In it he tells us why he undertook the task, and sets forth the high aims which inspired him when he sent the volume he had prepared with so much care to every bishop in England. The preface, as already quoted in the preceding chapter, eloquently reminds his readers of the past, when the church occupied a very different position among the people; and presses home to them the truth of which the patriot king was so intensely convinced, that the lost glory and influence of the church could only be won back when a real love of learning again animated her rulers and Christian teachers.

Other religious works are attributed to the pen of Alfred, besides these we have been referring to as being perhaps the most important; for instance, the Anglo-Saxon Anthology, from a composition of St. Augustine; and a portion of the Psalms; the latter was interrupted, apparently, by the death of the king. Besides theological works, Alfred translated and enlarged the "Chronicle of the World" by Orosius, Augustine's friend. This was a general summary of history and geography peculiarly valuable, for it contains a sketch of the chief German nations in the Anglo-Saxon king's time, and an account of the voyages of Othere to the far north, and of Wolfstan's Baltic voyages. Geography was a favourite study of Alfred, who eagerly sought after all the geographical knowledge available in his day.

We owe also to Alfred the English version and the enlargement of the Saxon Chronicle. To the ordinary reader the English Chronicle, up to the days of Alfred, when it broadens out into a vivid and picturesque narrative, presents but few features of special interest. It reads generally like a dry series of dates of the many years which the record covers, each year recording some accession of West Saxon king or bishop, or just mentioning some bloody battle, or terrible siege, or ruthless invasion. Nothing is written, scarcely, to relieve the dreary monotony of the entries. It is only when the work is examined, and its history told, that the enormous value and importance of the chronicle appears. Its story seems to be as follows:—

The year 635 witnessed the conversion and baptism of king Cynegils, of Wessex, by bishop Birinus, in the presence of Oswald, king of Northumbria, in the royal city of Dorchester. Birinus removed the seat of the West Saxon bishopric from Dorchester to Winchester. Like most other early Saxon and Engle religious houses

the episcopal monastery founded at Winchester seems to have had its chronicle or roll, which was little more than a meagre series of entries of the dates of accession of kings and bishops, with a few notable events interesting to the abbot or monastic scribe. From the days of Birinus onward the Winchester roll was continued, until the death of king Ina of Wessex, when troublous times distracted Wessex and disturbed the peace of the monastery; then the entries in the roll apparently ceased.

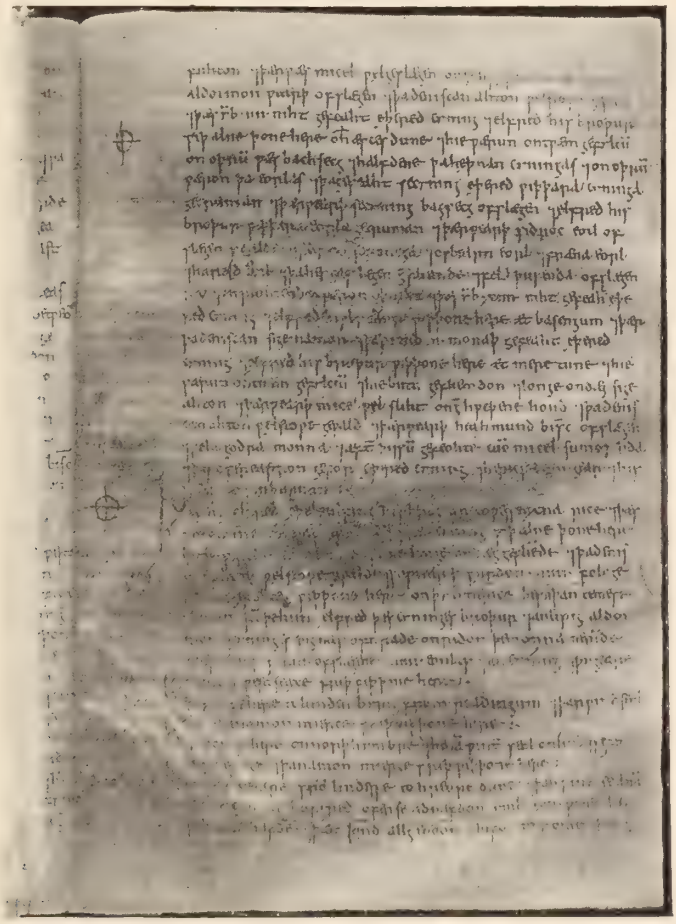
Swithun was the preceptor of Egbert's son Ethelwulf. In the year 838 he became bishop of Winchester, and during Ethelwulf's reign was his principal adviser. Quieter and more settled times had commenced with Egbert, and the "roll" of the episcopal monastery of Winchester, begun by bishop Birinus, was taken up by bishop Swithun, who interested himself much in this record. Swithun and his scribe seem to have done three things with the old roll. They filled up the gap in the records which occurred after the death of king Ina in 726; they continued the Chronicle by a series of interesting entries, with greater detail, of events which happened in their own age; and, what was most important of all, bishop Swithun and his scholar-scribe "prefixed to the opening of the Chronicle those broken traditions of the coming of 'our fathers,' which, touched as they are here and there by mythic intermixture, remain the one priceless record of the conquest of Britain" by the North-folk.* These annals, thus apparently embodied in the Chronicle by Swithun, of Winchester, somewhere about the middle of the ninth century, "represent the gleanings and reconstruction of the half-lost history of Wessex at the time of the first compilation (*circa* 855) by bishop Swithun." This section of the Chronicle, containing annals from 449 to the end of the Northmen's conquest, is seemingly made up from oral tradition of events precious to the people, from rare fragments of bardic poems, some of which, it will be remembered, we have already quoted and used for this present history, and lastly, from the official roll of kings, which even in the most illiterate period seems to have been carefully preserved. The peculiar value of these additions of Swithun consists in their being, outside the bardic poems, and the curious work of Gildas, the one solitary record of the conquest of Britain by the North-folk.

King Alfred, aided apparently in this instance by archbishop Plegmund of Canterbury, about the years 887-890, stimulated probably by the wide interest excited by his translation of and notes upon Bede's great ecclesiastical History, took up the Winchester Chronicle, enlarged and enriched by bishop Swithun's care, and *translated* it from the Latin, in which form it then existed, into English, or what is generally known as Anglo-Saxon. Alfred and his scholars prefaced the Chronicle thus translated with an introduction drawn from Bede, adding to it besides many details, also copied from the monk of Jarrow's history.

Thus the English Chronicle, which originally consisted of the meagre entries of bishop Birinus and his successors, was

* Earle: "Two Parallel Chronicles" (Introduction).

continued and enlarged by bishop Swithun, to whose loving care and scholarly industry we owe much of this curious tapestry of



PAGE FROM THE MS. OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE, CONTAINING THE ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE OF ASHDOWN.*

(Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.)

early memories made up of almost forgotten bardic poems, Runic inscriptions, and oral traditions. King Alfred and his scholars, among whom, in this case, archbishop Plegmund seems to have been specially employed, after translating and enlarging

bishop Swithun's work, with the "Bede" extracts, went on with it, making entries of events belonging to their own times. But no longer limiting its entries to a simple record of the accession of kings and

* This MS. (end of 9th century) is the oldest of the existing MSS. of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The name of Ashdown (æcesdune) may be seen in the fourth line.

the consecration of bishops, to the bare mention of certain battles and sieges and invasions, under Alfred the English Chronicle widens out into a vivid history full of interesting details.

The influence of the work of Alfred extended far beyond his own many and diversified works. The royal example had the effect he intended. The scholars he gathered round him were the pioneers of a new and vigorous school of *English* writers. Although from the days of our great scholar-king, Latin was a familiar study in the church schools of the land, yet the literature of the country, in accordance with Alfred's wish, became almost wholly vernacular. "Among the literatures of modern Europe, that of England led the way. Of the German folk across the sea, none were to possess a prose literature of their own for centuries to come. English, therefore, was not only the first Teutonic literature—it was the earliest prose literature of the modern world. And at the outset of English literature (especially in theology) stands the figure of Alfred." *

* Green: "Conquest of England," chap. iv. See generally—Pauli's exhaustive "Life of Alfred"; Sharon Turner: "History of the Anglo-Saxons," especially book v.; Earle and Plummer: "Two Saxon Chronicles"; Dr. Giles: "Anglo-Saxon Chronicles"; S. Brooke: "History of Early English Literature"; and Dean Hook: "Lives of Archbishops—Plegmund."

No mention has been made, in the foregoing study of king Alfred, of *St. Neot*, who has been in various histories often brought into connection with the works and days of the great king, upon evidence that will not bear critical examination. St. Neot is supposed to have aided the king in the foundation of the schools of Oxford. Much has been said and written on this "Oxford foundation" of the king. It is, however, too precarious an assumption to deserve grave mention. Sharon Turner evidently believes in the existence of this St. Neot, who, in a work of Asser, the genuineness of which has been called in question by critics, is called Alfred's kinsman. Pauli, in his well-known "Life of Alfred," does not hesitate to term St. Neot a purely mythical personage; perhaps too sweeping an assertion, for he qualifies it subsequently by a suggestion that "Alfred in his earlier years may have been connected with this saint, who lived in the south-west of England, and flourished unquestionably about the middle of the ninth century;" and that the king (when young), holding him in high estimation, may have taken advice from him. This St. Neot, however, was already dead in the year 877, when, according to a legend, he appeared to the king in a dream when Alfred was encamped at Athelney, before the fight at Ethandune.

CHAPTER XIX.

A GREAT ANGLO-SAXON CHURCHMAN AND HIS TIMES.

Alfred's successors—Edward subjugates the Danish part of England, and receives homage from Scotland—Athelstan—Edmund—Edred—Edwy—Edgar—Decline of religion during this period—Birth and early life of Dunstan—Work at Glastonbury—Educational and literary revival—Continental revival of monasticism—Dunstan's connection with the movement in England—Peculiar difficulties in England—Archbishop Odo—His pastoral letter—Death of Edred—Edwy and Elgiva—Accession of Edgar—Dunstan Prime Minister—His reforming work—His own moderation in reform—Brief reign of Edward, ended by his murder—Ethelred the Unready—Retirement and last years of the great statesman-ecclesiastic—Legends and honours—Biographies—Different views of Dunstan's character.

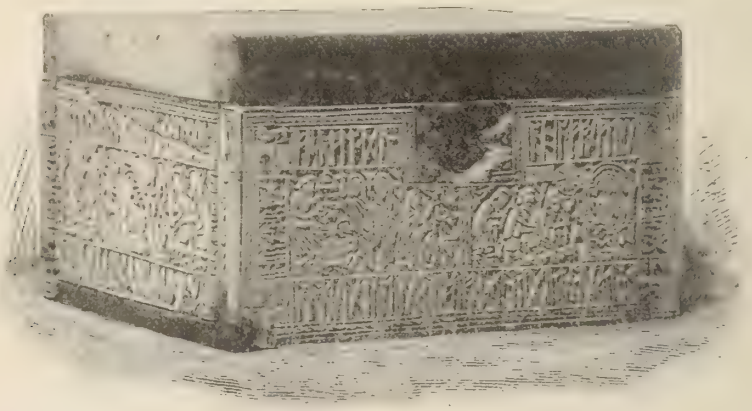
THE story of the period stretching from the death of Alfred in A.D. 901 to that of archbishop Dunstan in 988, when Ethelred the Unready was king, shows how well and solidly our hero-king had laid the foundations of a great and powerful England. His work must never be measured by the state of his realm at the date of his death; his ailing, suffering life was brought to a premature close, the king being little more than fifty years of age when the end came. It can only be fairly measured when we take into account what his successors were enabled to do so rapidly, building upon the sure foundation their great ancestor had laid so well.

Alfred's successor, Edward the Elder, reigned twenty-four years over England. It has been truly said of Edward, "that it is only the unequalled glory of his father which has doomed this prince, one of the greatest rulers that England ever beheld, to a smaller degree of popular fame than he deserves." His whole reign bears out the high praise given him by that ancient chronicler, Florence of Worcester, "that Edward was fully his father's equal as a warrior and a ruler, and was inferior to him in nothing except in those literary labours which were so peculiarly Alfred's own."

During the first nine years of Edward the Elder's reign, save an attempt on the part of his cousin Ethelwald, the son of Alfred's elder brother Ethelred, to dispute his kingly title—an attempt which was soon repelled—the peace of England was little broken. The English Danes were more or less cowed by their repeated repulses in the days of Alfred, and the foreign Vikings were largely occupied in northern Frank-land, where Rollo was consolidating his power at Rouen and in the Seine valley—a permanent Viking settlement that brought in its train momentous consequences. During these nine years Edward was not idle. In conjunction with his famous sister, the able and patriotic Ethelfleda—the Lady of the Mercians—fortresses were built on the borders of the English territory in all directions, notably at Chester, Tamworth, Warwick, Cherbury, Runcorn, Hertford.

When the war, so long and carefully prepared for, broke out between the

English and the Danes, in spite of fierce fighting on the part of the Northmen, victory everywhere declared itself for Edward. His forces were well-disciplined, a number of fortresses kept any invading army in check, a small but efficient fleet of war-ships patrolled the seas. Edward conquered East Anglia; and his sister Ethelfleda the famous Danish Confederaboroughs, which extended over a large portion of central England, submitted to Edward, and the Danish jarls became henceforth his vassals. Nor was this all. After the general submission of the eastern and central Danish districts to the English king, we find all the other independent princes of the island submitting themselves to Edward by a voluntary act, no doubt



ANCIENT NORTHUMBRIAN CASKET (KNOWN AS THE "FRANKS" CASKET), *circa* 8TH CENTURY.
(*British Museum.*)

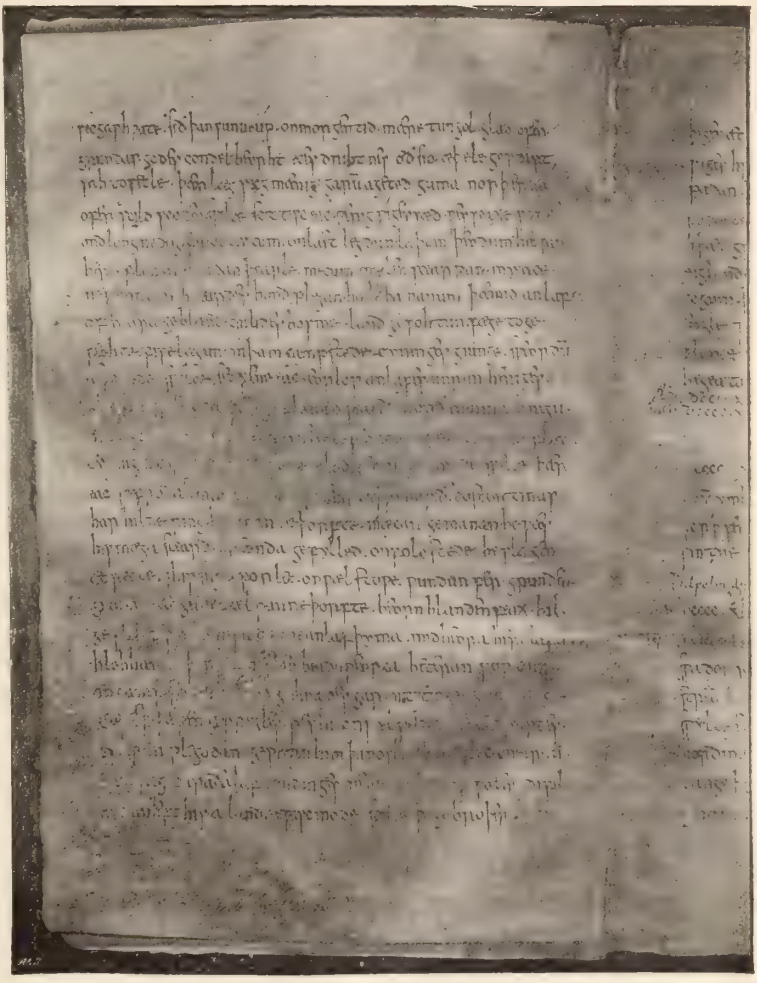
[The front represents on the right-hand side of the lock the Visit of the Magi, and on the left Herodias and her daughter receiving the head of John the Baptist. The side in view shows the finding of Romulus and Remus.]

tion of the five boroughs, which included Derby, Lincoln, Leicester, Nottingham, and Stamford, and the territory around.

The famous Lady of the Mercians died in 922, just as the war, so glorious for England, in which she had borne so large a part, was drawing to a close. The whole of the Danelaw* south of the Humber, including East Anglia, Essex, and the five from a general dread of his power. "They chose him," says the English Chronicle, "to father and to lord." The chieftains thus submitting themselves included the princes of Wales, Northumberland, Strathclyde, and Scotland—independent chieftains of nations made up of Britons, Scots, Picts, and Danes. Strathclyde was a small Welsh (British) kingdom which, roughly comprehending modern Cumberland and the south-west lowlands of Scotland, included the districts bordering on the estuary of the Clyde.

* The word "Danelaw" or "Danelaga," which is sometimes used as an equivalent for "Danish" England, signifies the region where the Danish law was in force.

This submission (922–924) of the Celtic kingdom of Scotland and Strathclyde to the son of Alfred, was the most distinctive feature in his great reign. It was an event which had great historic results in after years. "From this time to the fourteenth century, the vassalage of Scotland was an essential part of the public law of Britain. . . . The successors of the king of the English, who had once been voluntarily chosen to father and to lord, never willingly gave up the position thus bestowed upon them. Whenever the king of the English is strong enough, he always appears as the acknowledged superior of the king of the Scots. Kenneth acts the part of a faithful vassal to Edgar. Edward the Confessor transfers the tributary crown of Scotland from a usurper to the lawful heir. When the Norman William had subdued England, he claimed and received the homage of Scotland as one of the undoubted rights of the crown which he had won. And nothing is clearer than that this homage was paid, not only for Cumberland and Lothian, but for the true kingdom of the Celtic Picts and Scots." *



PAGE OF THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE, CONTAINING THE "SONG OF BRUNANBURGH." (END OF 9TH CENTURY.)
(From the MS. in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.)

* Freeman · "Norman Conquest."

In 925, Edward the Elder died, and was followed by his son Athelstan, another very illustrious member of the brilliant royal line of Alfred. Tradition has preserved to us the memory of the appearance of "Glorious Athelstan," as Florence of Worcester calls him, and tells us how the famous king and warrior was of a slight though vigorous frame, with golden hair. During king Athelstan's reign the name of England as a powerful state to be reckoned with in European politics, was heard far and wide. He was careful in seeking alliances among great foreign houses for his sisters, one of whom married Otto, afterwards emperor; another married Hugh the Great, the all-powerful duke of France, who refused the crown of France, and whose son, Hugh Capet, founded that royal house which was destined for so many centuries to play one of the leading parts in the story of the Western world.

But the power and influence of England on the continent was by no means the only noticeable work of Athelstan. At home the wealth of the people enormously increased during his wise reign. The rapid growth of prosperity and wealth in the land was shown by the prominence given to Athelstan's laws affecting property. We possess a long list of boroughs in Britain where mints for the coinage of money were established. Years were passed in peaceful, beneficent organisation of the now great and apparently united kingdom. We find this grandson of that Alfred whose realm was once bounded by the marshes which encircled the little Somersetshire island of Athelney, now announcing himself as "King of all Britain," as "Basileus of all English," and even as "Emperor of the kings and nations dwelling within the bounds of Britain."

In the midst of all this blaze of glory and undoubted prosperity, we come suddenly upon a great rising of the northern vassals of the English king, the men of the northern Danelaw, reinforced by the Irish Vikings—the Ostmen, as they were called—and aided by the kings of Scotland and Strathclyde. Athelstan and his brother Edmund at once marched northwards to meet this curious but formidable group of Celtic and Viking enemies, made up of races so long and so bitterly hostile one to the other. The English met the Danes with their Celtic allies on the field of Brunanburgh, the site of which is still undetermined, and the deadly fight went on from sunrise to sunset. There on that stricken field the work of Alfred and his son Edward, of the princess Ethelfleda, and of king Athelstan, was tested. The English men-at-arms, trained and disciplined in a hundred fights, prevailed, and the "shield wall" of the Viking and his Celtic ally was at last broken through. The victory of Athelstan was decisive. Among the heaped-up slain who fell on that memorable day, lay five crowned Viking chiefs, and seven of their more famous jarls. The song of Brunanburgh,* one of the grandest of English war-songs, woven into the curious tapestry of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, preserves the memory of the deadly fight which secured the power of the English king, and surrounded the head of Athelstan with a glory such as no English king had worn before.

Three years after the famous fight at

* Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 937. Green: "Conquest of England," chap. v.

Brunanburgh, in the year 940, "glorious" Athelstan died at Gloucester. The next two reigns, of his two brothers Edmund and Edred, are filled with the same scenes of monotonous war in the north; the Danes constantly revolting, and being as constantly brought back to submission by the valour and skill of the English kings. Edmund, whom the chronicler Florence of Worcester surnames the Magnificent, was assassinated while sitting at a feast, by an outlaw named Leofa, and thus the reign of a sovereign wise and beneficent, as well as successful in war, was brought to a premature conclusion. Edred, another brother of Athelstan, succeeded him in 946, and during a reign of nine years, in spite of much sickness and bodily weakness, valiantly pursued the same policy of a steady resistance to the Danish claims to independence—an independence invariably used to harry the English peoples.

But though the power and influence of England at home or abroad, under the great West Saxon kings of the house of Alfred — Edward, Athelstan, Edmund, Edred, and Edgar—was very great, a great deal of this power and influence was due to the personal character and distinguished talents of these eminent princes. Their efforts were ever directed to effecting fusion between the varied and often hostile races which occupied the island, comprehending the Engle and its several divisions, the Saxon, again subdivided, the Dane, and the Celt. At some of the more important meetings of the great national council—the Witan—notably under king Athelstan in the year 931, and again under king Edred in 946—we see sitting side by side jarls of the Danelaw, Saxon and Mercian earls and thanes, British (Celtic) princes, the archbishops of Canterbury and York. But this fusion of races, so conspicuous at the national Witan, was more apparent than real, and it is manifest that in those early days no sufficient national feeling existed to do away with the old love of local independence in the several kingdoms, and to make the various local rulers regard the king of England as *their* king.

In this passionate desire for independence, Athelstan, even after the decisive victory of Brunanburgh, had to acquiesce, and he judged it necessary to restore an under-kingship in Northumbria with a sort of independence. The under-king was subsequently replaced by an earl, and to the date of Norman William's conquest, Northumbria remained so distinct from England that no king's writ ran in the great northern earldom. Gradually the irresistible desire for a kind of separate existence forced even these powerful and able kings of the house of Alfred to separate England into great earldoms. The earl or alderman in most cases was chosen out of the royal Wessex family: but none the less were these powerful divisions of the land, destroying as they necessarily did the sense of national unity, a source of grave danger to the unity of England. The earls and the king, although perhaps kinsmen, would naturally often come into conflict. The king would be thinking of England; the earl rather of his own special province. The danger of such a conflict of interests between these too-powerful subjects and the Crown, less apparent when a true statesman king like Edgar occupied the throne, became, when a weak sovereign

like Ethelred the Unready wore the crown, pressing and ever-present; and in the end the internal conflicts provoked by jealousies and conflicting interests between the king and the great earls, paved the way to the subjugation of England by Swein and Canute, the Danish kings. In the reigns of Athelstan and his immediate successors, England was parcelled out into the following earldoms—Northumbria, East Anglia, Essex (including Middlesex, and part of Berkshire), the five boroughs, Mercia, including Oxfordshire (into two divisions); another earldom, including the south-western counties, and one more, comprehending central Wessex, were added.

It was in the reign of Edred (946) that the influence of Dunstan—Dunstan the Benedictine monk, abbot, bishop, and archbishop—became supreme in church and state. King Edred died in 955, after a long struggle against sickness, the last survivor of the three illustrious sons of Edward the Elder. He left no heirs, but his brother and predecessor Edmund had two boys, Edwy and Edgar, the former of whom, on the death of Edred, was acknowledged as sovereign of England. He reigned less than four years, during which period Edgar reigned as sub-king in the country north of the Thames.

Edwy was succeeded by his brother Edgar, surnamed the Peaceful, in 958; and for seventeen years, until the year 975, the throne was occupied by this prince. It was a period of almost unbroken peace, and the one minister and adviser of the reign was the celebrated Dunstan, who became archbishop of Canterbury the year after Edgar's accession. It was a time of great prosperity for England. We hear of no Danish rising at home, and of no Viking invasion from abroad. The power of the great earls remained unbroken in their several districts, but we hear of no serious conflicts between them and the king.

Under Edgar and his ecclesiastical minister, England held a high place in the estimation of the chief nations on the continent, while the wealth of the country rapidly increased, owing much to its growing commercial prosperity. Literature revived under the steady protection and encouragement of the all-powerful prelate; a stricter and nobler and more self-denying life among the clergy and ecclesiastics advanced the best interests of the church. The days of Edgar were emphatically the period of the greatest glory and prosperity of Saxon England.

But with the death of Edgar the glory of the island sank. He passed away after a peaceful and vigorous reign of seventeen years, in 975, leaving two sons—Edward the Martyr, and Ethelred, surnamed the Unready. During the short reign of Edward, archbishop Dunstan continued in office; but when, three years later, Edward was foully murdered, and his brother Ethelred succeeded him on the throne in 978, the archbishop fell from power, and for the remaining ten years of his eventful life lived in comparative seclusion at Canterbury. He died in 988. In the sad reign of Ethelred the Danish invasion recommenced, and with a more terrible result than ever; but we now leave this brief sketch of the history of England since the death of her great king Alfred—necessary as a background—to resume our story of the Church of England

during that period, covering some eighty or ninety years.

During the first half of the tenth century, things in the church had been going backwards. The religious and literary work of Alfred had been necessarily suffered to had no successor. Nor was the church more happy in this respect than the state. No distinguished prelate, no fervid and devoted religious scholar or missionary, arose in the course of the first forty years of the century. It was only in the second half of the tenth century that

THE ESCAPE OF KING EDMUND (*p.* 414).

languish. The princes who sat on his throne were almost ceaselessly occupied with war. It was a stern combat for very existence, and the intervals of peace were perhaps too short for any real united effort of church and state towards consolidating and developing Alfred's work. It must also be confessed that, although Edward the Elder and Athelstan and his gallant brothers were great and successful warriors, in letters and in love for religion Alfred there appeared one of those extraordinary characters whose strength of will, whose learning and splendid devotion infused a new spirit into the church, which in the days of Athelstan and his brothers was scarcely fulfilling its high mission among the people.

Dunstan, somewhile abbot of Glastonbury, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, was born in the first year of king Athelstan's reign, 924–925. His father and

mother were noble West Saxons, whose property lay in the centre of Somerset, close by the Tor Hill, so well known as looking down on sacred Glastonbury. He is described as a fair-haired little boy, with a passion for music from his childhood, and with an intense love for the old songs and hymns still sung in the evening gatherings in the thane's hall.

Glastonbury, hard by his father's home, was famous as a place to which pilgrims resorted; was yet more renowned as a school. In this home of learning—apparently the only notable seminary then in England—the boy Dunstan laid the foundation of his great scholarship and many acquirements; there he learned to love and to prize books and study. When quite young his ardour for reading and his knowledge became known at court; he was sent for, and became one of the young king's companions. The dates that we possess of the early days of this remarkable man are few, but from the details preserved in his biographies—two of which were written within a very few years of his death, and one of the two by a personal friend—we are enabled to put together a fairly accurate sketch of his early life.

At the court of Athelstan—where he seems to have been on terms of friendship with the young brothers of the king, Edmund and Edred, both afterwards kings of England—his many and varied gifts soon excited jealousy and dislike among the other young thanes of the court. Dunstan was evidently unlike other men. Brilliant, excitable, rarely and exceptionally gifted, he fancied he saw visions; he was intensely religious. These peculiarities, which made him different from other youths of his own age, stirred up hatred and envy. We find him compelled to leave the court for a season, and when, after the accession of Edmund, he was recalled, he became the victim of a cruel outrage. One day, as he was riding through the marshes, some of the more bitter of his foes among the young thanes, threw the young dreamer from his horse, and trampled him under foot in the mire. A grave illness followed the cowardly attack, and we next find him a monk. But a monk in those times was under no necessity to quit the world, and Dunstan again appears at Edmund's court.

Once more he excited the same jealousy and hatred; but just as he was about to quit England for Germany, a strange incident befel king Edmund. In the ardour of the chase, one day, a red-deer which Edmund was pursuing among the Mendip Hills, in its headlong course sprang over the steep cliffs of Cheddar. Only on the very brink of the awful precipice was the king able to rein in his horse. The shock determined him to make amends to Dunstan. Instead of allowing him to go into exile, Edmund made him abbot of Glastonbury; and from this time really dates the story of the mighty influence and work of the future statesman and archbishop, whose splendid industry and foresight, after years of patient toil, restored the Church of England to its place as the guide and teacher of the country. Dunstan became abbot of Glastonbury in the year 942 or 943.

The foregoing brief account of his early life probably accurately represents its leading features. It is derived from the somewhat prolix story told by his earliest biographers, who, however, have adorned

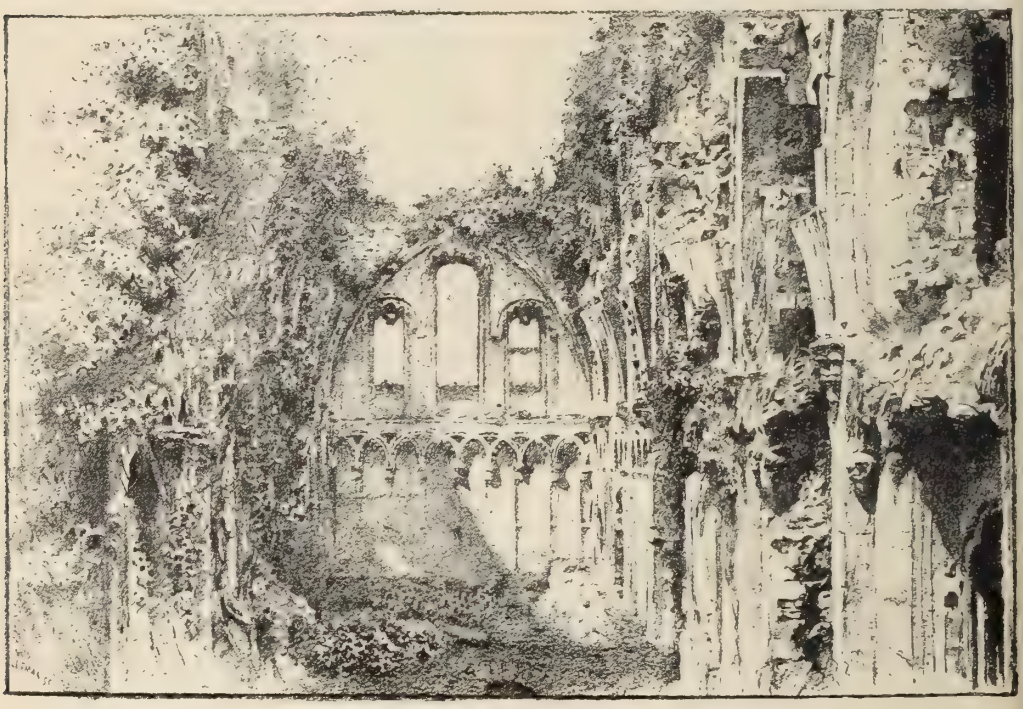
it with various seemingly miraculous adjuncts, many of which, based on real incidents, no doubt are due to the excitable and feverish imaginings of a precocious youth whose health was often undermined by overmuch study and vigil, and prolonged fasts. Through all, however, we catch sight of a singularly gifted and impulsive student, at once poet, musician, artist and scholar; one to whom was evidently given the power to attract the devoted love and admiration of some, and the hatred and dislike of others. The being early placed in a position of dignity and power, where his great gift of attracting men, his ardent love for scholarship, his evident and real piety, would find an ample sphere, no doubt developed all that was good and great in Dunstan, and constrained him to correct and finally to obtain the mastery over much in his character that was hysterical and ill-balanced.

Glastonbury and its famous school, at the head of which, under the title of abbot, Dunstan found himself in the years 942–3, had a great history, which stretched far back into the ages which preceded the Anglo-Saxon conquest. There was evidently an ancient ecclesiastical establishment there in the seventh century. "As the place of Dunstan's birth, education, and promotion, Glastonbury had a later history, much of which is coloured by its connection with this eminent saint and statesman. It became a rich abbey, and laid claim to an early history and remote antiquity; it adopted Joseph of Arimathæa as its first founder, and produced evidence of its existence and sanctity under kings and in times long anterior to the West Saxon rule. Not only Edmund the Magnificent, ruler of Britain, and Edgar the Peaceful, and Edmund Ironside, but king Arthur himself slept there." *

Although these splendid traditions only first appear woven into a complete tapestry, in the pages of the Norman chronicler, William of Malmesbury, in the early years of the twelfth century, there is little doubt but that Glastonbury was indeed a famous centre long before the days of Aldhelm and the early West Saxon times; and had perhaps been a Celtic sanctuary, revered and famous, before the coming of the North-folk in the sixth century had swept away the once powerful and learned ancient British Christianity. When Dunstan became its abbot, Glastonbury was a renowned seminary — little more. A few secular priests still ministered in its church, and it was not a monastery in the usual acceptation of the term. Monastic life had really ceased to exist in England in those days. In the north the Danes had swept away all the once flourishing religious houses of both sexes. In the south of the island, as we have seen, king Alfred had failed to restore monasticism. A few communities had been established by the great king's piety and zeal; failing, however, to captivate the hearts of the West Saxons, they had never taken firm root. We hear of no daughter-houses of the original foundations springing up; and when Dunstan became abbot of Glastonbury the few foundations of Alfred were languishing and in a state of decay. Glastonbury existed and flourished, it is true, but it flourished rather as a school than as a religious community of monks.

* Bishop Stubbs: "Memorials of St. Dunstan."

And it was as a school that Dunstan first devoted himself to its care, and developed far and wide its useful and beneficent work. For some years Dunstan's life was mainly passed in his loved abbey. He was determined to infuse a new life into the church, to repair the mischief which long and constant wars had effected among the works of Alfred. The various educational efforts which the great king had set on foot had well-nigh died away. There were few monks even in the south of England, and these were subject to no definite rule. Benedictinism in England was practically extinct. The clergy had reverted largely to a state of ignorance, and even of worldliness. Marriage, which was against the accepted ecclesiastical ideal of those days, was common among them, and the sacredness of the marriage tie, alas! was not always regarded.* The remarkable impulse which Alfred's great example and powerful influence had given to literature ended with the king's life. Not a book or even a translation, save the continuation of the English Chronicle, had appeared since the scholar-king had been laid to sleep at Winchester.

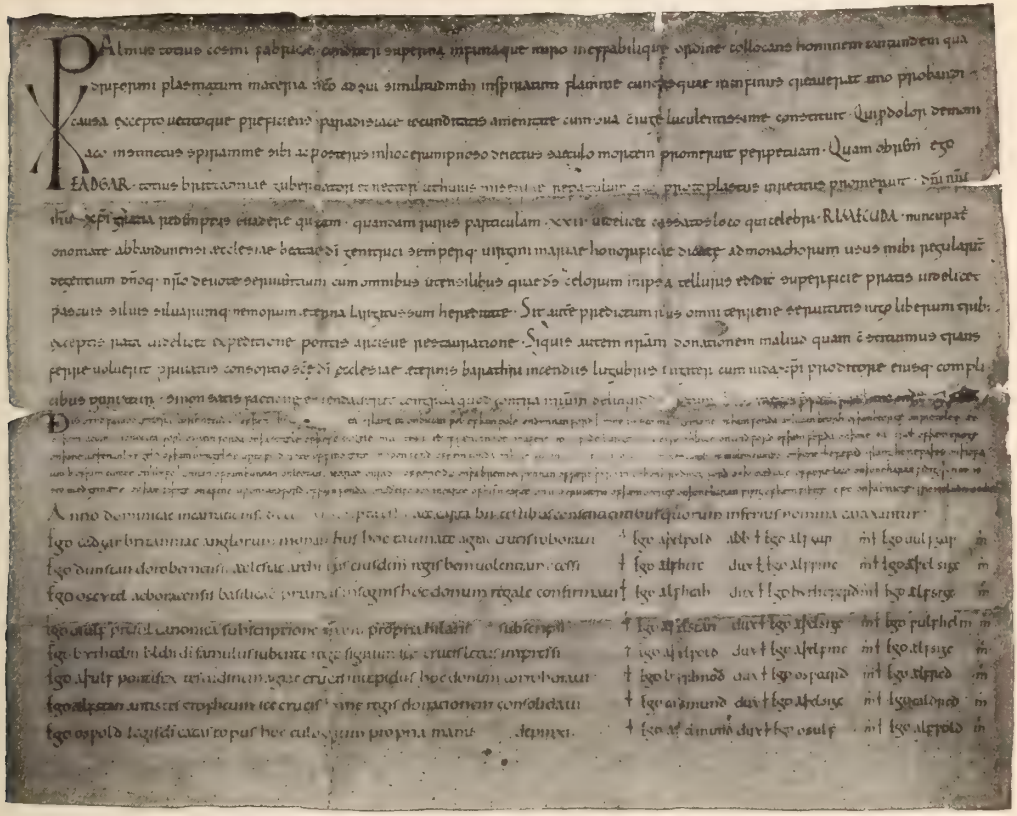


THE LADY CHAPEL, GLASTONBURY ABBEY. (12TH CENTURY.)

Dunstan possessed the instincts of a true church reformer, and felt that no stern

* Various documents show that it was far from uncommon for priests to take advantage of the uncanonical character of such marriages, to repudiate their wives after a period and marry others.

laws, no infusion of a more generous and fervid spirit, would have any lasting results among an ignorant clergy. Like Alfred, he felt that the cause of education was the cause of religion; and so, first and no mere statesman educationalist, who well and wisely arranged and developed schools, and provided generously the means of education. Dunstan was all this, but in addition was himself a wise and



CHARTER OF EDGAR, A.D. 961, GRANTING LAND AT RIMECUDA (RYE) TO THE MONASTERY OF ABINGDON, *witnessed by Dunstan, Oskytel Archbishop of York, and other bishops, abbots, etc.*

foremost, this really great ecclesiastic devoted himself and his great powers to restore to the church a love of learning. No portion of his noble life was more fraught with results than the quiet years passed at Glastonbury, after his appointment as its abbot. He was a born teacher of the highest order—no mere organiser, tireless teacher; and it was thus that he so captivated the hearts of the people, that for more than two centuries he was the favourite saint of the English. Simple stories were long told of his kindliness of heart, which won his pupils' affection; how he would sing psalms to them in his sweet voice as they walked together; how he

recounted his sorrow for the loss of a dead child pupil, and how he was comforted in a vision for his little scholar's death, when he saw his loved child borne by angels heavenwards.

From Glastonbury the celebrated Ethelwold, once the pupil and afterwards the chief teacher under Dunstan, went to the abbey of Abingdon, of which house in 955 king Edred, Dunstan's friend, appointed him abbot. Aided by a few Glastonbury teachers trained by Dunstan, Ethelwold soon made his school celebrated; it even rivalled Glastonbury as an educational centre. From these two schools the new spirit gradually spread through Wessex and Mercia, and a new and better state of things was soon apparent in the southern and central districts of England. Nor was it only the Church of England that benefited by abbot Dunstan's educational work. The church, it was true, was invigorated and renewed by the spirit of learning which Dunstan so wisely infused into it. But his great schools of Glastonbury and Abingdon gave also to *secular* literature a new impulse. We date from this period a mass of homilies and scriptural versions, and saints' lives, and grammars and lesson books. All this tells us of a real awakening among the clergy of the Church of England to a desire for knowledge, that they might be better teachers of their flocks.

There was also a love of poetry visible in this new intellectual life which Dunstan awakened in Wessex and Mercia; though very inferior, it is true, to that noble school of poetry which flourished in Northumbria in the great age which went before the disastrous coming of the Vikings. No one like Cædmon or Cynewulf, with their strange and stately religious song, arose in the south and midlands at this time. But the great Glastonbury scholar taught the southern England of his day and time to love the great Northumbrian poets of a vanished age; and our own age owes to the poetry-loving schools of Dunstan not a few of the remains it possesses of the striking Northumbrian songs. It is in translations largely made in the days of Dunstan, into the West Saxon dialect, that we know the poems of Cædmon and Cynewulf, and the nameless writers of their school. In their original Northumbrian dialect we scarcely possess a line.

But if in this period no really great original song-man sprang up, many popular poems were written. Such were the battle-songs of Brunanburgh—woven into the English Chronicle—and Maldon, and the death-songs of Edgar and Edward, some of them poems of no mean power. Other and slighter songs, too, were often written in this age, prose versions of which are preserved for us by William of Malmesbury; songs which had for their heroes kings like Athelstan and Edgar, whose doughty and patriotic deeds had won the people's heart. The titles of some of these are worth recording as indicating the love for romantic poetry which had suddenly been born among the people. In ballad poetry, songs were written under the titles of "The Birth of the Kings," "The Drowning of Edwin," "The Craft of Anlaf." Belonging to Edgar's time we find "The Slave Queen," "Edgar and Elfthryth," "Edgar and the Scot-king."*

*See Green: "Conquest of England," chap. vi., and William of Malmesbury: "Gesta Regum."

In the meantime a great change and revival in monastic life was impending. Monasticism in England, as a power, had disappeared; in Mercia and in Wessex a few religious houses founded or restored by Alfred still remained; but as an institution it had completely ceased to influence the life of the church. Remembering, however, what the monasteries had done in the matter of evangelising the conquering North-folk in the seventh and eighth centuries; what noble centres of piety and learning the great religious communities had been before Viking or Dane settled in England; calling to mind the honoured names of Columba and of Columban, of the mighty parent house of Luxeuil, and the network of monasteries and nunneries with which Columban had covered northern Europe; religious kings like Alfred, and far-seeing but ascetic churchmen like Dunstan, naturally regarded the restoration of monasticism as absolutely necessary to the renewal of a vigorous and active church-life. Alfred in real earnest set himself the task of re-introducing religious houses throughout his dominion; but his efforts were only crowned with partial success, and the disturbed state of England after his death effectually prevented anything like a development of his scheme for the restoration of monasticism: the time was then not yet come.

On the continent of Europe also, for a considerable period, the monastic life had been on the decline. The same causes which had contributed to its ruin in England were at work in Germany and Frankland. For many years the Viking raids had desolated the fairest provinces of northern Europe. The more prominent monastic houses, with their precious treasures, utterly defenceless, had been the first objects of attack by these pirate invaders. In the districts watered by the great rivers, scarcely one monastery had escaped. Other causes, too, had been at work which helped on the general decay of the institution. The past fervour shown by the church and monastic reformers—men like Benedict and Columban and their companions—had long waned, and in the lament of the Council of Trosley, in 909, we get some notion of the state of the religious communities of northern Europe, at the time when the princes of the house of Alfred were reigning in England, and gradually bringing into subjection the fierce Danish intruders. Some monasteries had been burnt or destroyed by the pagan Vikings, some had been plundered of their property, and those which remained observed no form of a regular institute. They had no proper heads; their manner of life was disorderly; some monks had deserted their profession, and were even employing themselves in worldly business. Lay abbots with their wives and children, with their soldiers and dogs, occupied the cloisters, and the inmates of monasteries had cast off all regard for rule as to dress and diet.

Louis the Pious, Charlemagne's son and heir, in the first half of the ninth century had attempted a reform, but the ever-increasing troubles of the empire had rendered these efforts abortive. Early in the following century—the tenth—monastic reformation was at length undertaken in good earnest and with conspicuous success by a private individual.

Berno, abbot of Beaume, the founder and abbot of another house—Gigni—having succeeded in reforming the way of life of these two societies in the year 912, when Edward the Elder, Alfred's son, was king in England, was invited by William, duke of Upper Aquitaine, or Auvergne, to select a spot in his territory for a new monastery of which Berno should be the first abbot. Berno selected Cluny, near Mâcon. This had once been the home of a society of canons, but when Berno fixed upon it as the home of his new community, Cluny was used as a hunting-box by the duke. Twelve monks accompanied the abbot to the new house.

The rule of St. Benedict in its ancient integrity was adopted by the little society, and thus, with this humble start, the monastery of Cluny, in 912, began its historic career. In the year 927, shortly after the accession of Athelstan in England, Berno was succeeded as abbot in Cluny by the celebrated Odo.

Odo is generally reckoned as the real founder of the famous Cluniac order ; for to him are attributed the various ascetic additions to the rules of Benedict peculiar to the Cluniac order of monks. One of these strange regulations required the monks, at the close of their scanty repasts, to gather up and to consume all the crumbs of their bread. Some of the brothers desiring to evade this seemingly trivial and arbitrary rule, a tradition of the order relates how a dying monk exclaimed in horror that the Evil One was holding up in accusation against him a bag of crumbs which he had been unwilling to swallow. Periods of strict silence were also enjoined upon the members of the community. Even the use of medicine in the case of sickness was forbidden.

The fame of Cluny rapidly grew ; the austerities of the house were adopted in other communities. A number of conspicuous saints belonging to this now famous house spread abroad its growing reputation. Mayeul, the fourth abbot, in 965 (Edgar being king of England) refused the archbishopric of Besançon, and in 974 even declined the highest honour of the popedom. His successor Odilo, fifth abbot of Cluny, attained through his reputation for austere sanctity an enormous reputation. Popes of Rome treated him as their equal, kings and emperors sought his advice ; bishops went to Cluny and became monks under his direction as pupils. His contemporary, Fulbert of Chartres, even styles him "The Archangel of Monks." He was credited with miraculous powers, and his prayers were said to possess strange efficacy.

The monastic reform inaugurated by the Burgundian house of Cluny extended itself far and wide ; a new passion for monasticism sprang up, innumerable monasteries adopted the stern Cluniac rules, and were more or less closely affiliated to the great mother monastery, and thus gradually the "congregation of Cluny" was formed.

The organisation of the now famous order was completed by Hugh, the sixth abbot, in 1049, who ruled the "congregation" for some sixty years. The reformed order continued to grow in number and importance ; it spread over France, Germany, Italy, and England, and by the close of the twelfth century the enormous number of 2,000 daughter-houses had adopted the

ascetic rules, and were obedient to the mother-house of Cluny.

While thus in the early years of the tenth century monasticism seemed to be dying, and occupied less and less space in the hearts of earnest and religious men, of a sudden it sprang up again. Before the next century—the eleventh—closed, everywhere on the continent of Europe the monastery and nunnery had more than regained their ancient influence over the hearts of men. In France, the abbeys of Citeaux (Burgundy) and the Grande Chartreuse (near Grenoble)

PAGE FROM THE BENEDICTIONAL OF ETHELWOLD (A.D. 963-984), SHOWING THE VISIT OF THE THREE MARYS TO THE SEPULCHRE.

(*In the possession of the Duke of Devonshire.*)

became the mother-abbeys of two great orders—the Cistercian and Carthusian—whose houses, scattered over Europe, became in their day one of the most powerful influences in the church. The wave passed over Italy also, and the historian of church life there, among the new influences in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, had to reckon with the enormous influence of the reformed cloister, and to tell at length the story of the rigid and ascetic orders of Camaldoli and Vallombrosa.

The same wave of reviving attachment to the monastic institution which passed over France, and through France to Italy and Germany, reached the shores of England. But while on the continent it was a work of reform, in England it was almost a re-creation; and it belonged to a somewhat later period to witness the complete restoration of the monastic system to its ancient position of influence. This it eventually regained, though not till after the second great age of revival, in the days of Lanfranc and Anselm, the Norman archbishops. Among the works of Dunstan for the church, however, even the partial restoration of the monastic system must occupy a prominent position. Three names are inseparably connected with this movement: Odo, archbishop of Canterbury, a friend of Dunstan, and whose appointment to the great post of primate was evidently owing to the influence of the powerful abbot of Glastonbury; Oswald, the nephew of Odo, another of the followers of Dunstan; and Ethelwold, the Glastonbury teacher, who went from Dunstan's school to organise and teach the equally famous seminary at Abingdon. Ethelwold in after days became bishop of Winchester.

To expel the clerks and canons from their homes in the existing monasteries, and from the buildings attached to the cathedral, was no easy task. Not only had the reformers to encounter opposition and hatred at the hands of the dispossessed, but in some cases from the people, with whom these secular clerks and canons were popular. In the next century, for instance, we read of disturbances and an armed resistance. At Gloucester, where the secular canons were defended by a wealthy thane, much blood was shed, and seven of the new monks placed in the Gloucester religious house were killed in a popular uproar.*

Ethelwold, bishop of Winchester, and Oswald, bishop of Worcester, and subsequently archbishop of York, were, with

* The Early English or Anglo-Saxon people seem to have had the same strong common-sense preference for a married clergy which distinguishes the nation to the present day; and their supersession by celibate priests or monks was not finally completed till after the Norman conquest. This quasi-toleration of marriage preserved England in a measure from some of the scandals which prevailed where a strict rule was enforced; and there is evidence that the attempt to enforce the rule, produced much of the scandal that did exist, such as the temporary unions already referred to. On the other hand, it must in fairness be remembered that the celibate idea was itself a reaction against the sensuality and animalism of the age; that it was the *accepted* ideal, however mistaken, for a Christian minister of that day; and that all these men had taken vows to abide by it. Obligations so held could hardly be abandoned without a sense of guilt and spiritual loss in various ways, which, in its turn, would lead to other sins and neglect in many cases. It is a sad picture in many aspects, and the evil which in one way or another must result from the undue burdening of conscience by merely "ecclesiastical" offences, is perhaps one of the most impressive of its lessons.

Odo of Canterbury, the leaders in this stern work of reformation. The first two were especially zealous and uncompromising in their measures. They were, all three, friends or disciples of Dunstan, and were intensely convinced that the Saxon church could never be brought to a state of purity and strength, until *real* monks were generally introduced into the old and decaying, as well as in the new religious houses, and also in the cathedral chapters. They were also well acquainted with the zeal and fervour of the reformed monasteries of Frank-land, and were determined to reproduce "Cluny" and "Fleury," and the stern ascetic discipline practised by the devoted inmates of these and other famous religious houses, in their native country.

It is difficult to estimate fairly the true condition of these English ecclesiastical centres. Elfric, the biographer of bishop Ethelwold, draws a sad picture of the old minster at Winchester. It has been suggested* that Elfric's picture may be exaggerated, it being a kind of apology for Ethelwold's drastic proceedings; still it must be remembered that it is the testimony of an eye-witness. He describes these Winchester secular clergy as living in luxury, as devoted to the pleasures of the table, as living for a season with wives to whom they were unlawfully married. On the other hand, Dunstan, who was equally in earnest in the work of regenerating and purifying the church, certainly never removed the secular clerks from his own cathedral at Canterbury; an incredible piece of laxity, if these men were living in the state of indulgence and sin described so graphically by Elfric. The truth probably lies between the two extremes. Many of the English secular clergy were no doubt living, if not vicious, at least slothful lives; some probably deserved even the bitter words of Elfric; while others, among whom the Canterbury clergy must be included, were working quietly and peaceably as married men with their wives and children. The reformers, however, proceeded with their work; the Benedictine rule and severe discipline was introduced at Winchester, Chertsey, Milton, Ely, Peterborough, and Thorney, and in these and various other places it is clear that the monastic revival was successful, and did a useful and beneficent work. No doubt many instances of hardship and even of cruelty occurred in the cases of the men dispossessed, but in time a more learned, nobler, and purer church emerged as the result of the life, work, and labours of the ascetic reformers.

The story of Odo, who preceded Dunstan in the primate's throne at Canterbury, is striking and picturesque, and gives us a good picture of an eminent churchman in those stormy and disturbed times. Indeed, the great part he played in the work of renewing the spiritual life of the Church of England has been largely forgotten and obscured in the blaze of glory which surrounds the memory of Dunstan. Odo, subsequently archbishop, was the son of a Dane of noble birth, who had been a chieftain among the wild Vikings who followed the fortunes of the dreaded pirate leaders Ivar and Hubbo in the famous Danish invasion of the year 870—the raid which, it will be remembered, resulted in the capture of York, and the conquest of

* Bishop Stubbs: "Memorials of Dunstan."

and permanent Danish settlement in the north of England. The young Dane was attracted by the fervid preaching of a Christian missionary, and, against the will of his pagan father, renounced the old faith of the Northmen, and, placing himself under the tuition of a Christian thane at the court of Alfred, became a devoted adherent of Christianity. His early career was a romantic one. The devotion and persistent zeal of one of the hated pagan race soon attracted attention, and in the year 926, when Athelstan was king, we hear of Odo, the Danish convert, as consecrated to the bishopric of Romsey. Romsey was a small Wessex diocese, afterwards merged into that of Salisbury. It was a strange career, that of Odo. With all his undoubted zeal and earnestness on behalf of the religion for which he had sacrificed all his home ties, the old Viking blood showed itself in the Danish bishop. He was certainly present at the bloody fight of Brunanburgh in 937, when Athelstan defeated the formidable union of Northumbrians, Vikings, and Irish Ostmen ; and a probably true tradition is handed down that Odo on that occasion saved king Athelstan's life. When the chair of the primacy was vacant, the influence of Dunstan, then abbot of Glastonbury, and the trusted friend and counsellor of king Edmund—Athelstan's brother and successor—procured Odo's elevation to the arch-see.

Before his enthronement at Canterbury, in 942, he spent some time in the great Loire monastery of Fleury, where the rule of St. Benedict was rigidly kept. Fleury ranked at that time, perhaps, as the leading religious house of the great Benedictine order. To its cloister repaired not a few of the men who took a leading part in the revival of church life and energy of that time. In Fleury, the ecclesiastic who believed that only in a restoration of a *real* monasticism could the church recover its vitality and influence over men's hearts, would see what was the secret of Benedictinism, and how men were trained to become true monks. In the enduring and almost passionate attachment to the loved monastery, of such eminent prelates as Oswald, bishop of Worcester and archbishop of York, we see how strong a hold over ardent and devoted souls the life and teaching of a religious community like Fleury was able to exercise.

The cathedral and monastic establishment of Canterbury, once famous throughout northern Europe as a great school, was sadly changed. The cathedral itself Odo found in a state of dilapidation ; of the once renowned school we hear little. One of the first works of the new archbishop was a complete restoration of the venerable pile, which had suffered so much at the hands of the Viking pirates and from subsequent neglect. The old roof was stripped and re-covered with lead ; the massive piers were strengthened ; a new life was infused into the metropolitan church, which once more was filled with worshippers.

We possess a pastoral letter of the Danish archbishop who owed his promotion to Dunstan's friendship and support. This pastoral of Odo is an interesting document, for it tells us a good deal of the earnestness and reality with which the reformers of the school of Dunstan were inspiring the Church of England. He began in the name of the Holy Trinity and the one

DUNSTAN AT THE TOMB OF ODO (*p.* 427).

Deity with: "I, Odo, the lowly and meanest that is promoted to the honour of a pall and of being chief prelate, have resolved to put together some institutions . . . . to the consolation of my lord the king, that is, Edmund, and of all the people subject to his most excellent empire." In the first division of his pastoral he dwelt on the subject of *taxes*, which he declared ought not to be imposed upon the Church of God. In his second division he admonishes—or it would be more correct to say commands—the king, princes, and all that were in authority to be obedient to their archbishops and all other bishops, reminding these great worldly rulers that to bishops belonged the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and that they had the power of binding and loosing. In the third paragraph Odo turns to the prelates of that church for which he demands exemption from state taxation.

First, to *the bishops*—whose claim to a universal obedience he has put forward, as above, with no little arrogance; but he sharply and gravely admonishes these spiritual chiefs, telling them if their privileges are great, their duties are onerous in proportion. They must preach, said Odo, and show a good example to all; they must go about their parishes every year "vigilantly preaching the word of God." The Danish archbishop evidently set much store by the influence which the preaching of the bishops would exercise upon the people at large. He warned them against covetousness, and for a *third* time bade them "preach" the word of truth to all, without regard of persons—to king and princes, to all dignities alike. The *priests* too, while not neglecting to instruct their people in holy doctrine, were to be careful to teach by the force of a good example; in their life and conversation, in matters of goodness and modesty, they were to excel others, they were to live with all honesty and reverence. The *monks* and all "devoted to God," day and night were to study, to perform their vows, abiding quietly in the churches where they first pronounced those vows. Such monks were not to be strollers and saunterers through the world, men who desire the name but despise the duties of a monk. They were to inure themselves to habits of humility, to labour with their hands, to give themselves continually to holy reading and to continual prayer. The pastoral contained other injunctions, sternly forbidding the marriage of persons of near kindred, or of nuns; and enjoining fasting and almsgiving. It directed a reverent observation of Lent and other lawful fasts, and, above all, pressed upon the people the duty of keeping the Lord's day and the festivals of saints.

We gather from this ecclesiastical state paper, that already a great revival of life and work had begun in the Church of England, that the church was exercising considerable power and influence in the land, and that monasticism was evidently reviving and again becoming a power; while the grave remonstrances addressed to bishops, clergy, and monks showed the anxiety which men like Odo and of the school of Dunstan felt, as to the conduct and life of ecclesiastical persons. The future of the Church of England, they felt, largely depended upon the example of these bishops, clergy, and monks. As might have been expected from his Viking

ancestry, Odo, while intensely in earnest, indefatigable in his work and efforts to bring life and vigour into the church in which he held so distinguished a position, was harsh and even cruel in his procedure against married clerks, and even against secular clerks occupying positions he looked upon as better filled by Benedictine monks. Owing to this harsh, unyielding policy, he acquired the name of "Severus."

To Dunstan, whose influence was evidently very great, if not paramount during the time of Odo's rule at Canterbury, this Danish prelate was always true; and a touching story is told of Dunstan's loyalty to the memory of his friend. After Dunstan had become in his turn archbishop, and was officiating one Whit Sunday in the cathedral, there settled on Odo's tomb—shaped like a pyramid, on the south side of Christ's altar—a dove, which had flown through an open window. To the archbishop's fervid and imaginative spirit this was a visible descent of the Holy Spirit on his dead friend's grave, thus publicly proclaiming to men that Odo was counted holy before the throne of God.

All through the rule of Odo at Canterbury, Dunstan continued his great educational work at Glastonbury, in conjunction with the daughter school at Abingdon under his friend and disciple, Ethelwold. He was, however, often at Winchester, where king Edred, Athelstan's younger brother, who followed King Edmund on the throne, usually held his court. The friendship dating from their boyish days, between Edred and Dunstan, remained unbroken. The great churchman's life was, during this period, divided between Glastonbury and its famous school, and the court, where Dunstan acted as treasurer of the "Royal Hoard" and estates. It was in one of his attendances on the king, during a visit paid by Edred to the north, that Dunstan saw the remains of St. Cuthbert, still incorrupt, and to which Abbo of Fleury, in his well-known letter to Dunstan, written later between the years 985 and 988, alludes.

Edred, who throughout a fairly successful reign of about nine years had struggled against constant ill-health, finally succumbed to his malady in 955. Dunstan's power in church and state during his friend's reign had been very great; his ceaseless labour in promoting education has been already dwelt upon, and gradually the church was being strengthened and purified. In political matters his great influence seems to have been exerted with equal wisdom. Northumbria peacefully acquiesced in the sovereignty of Edred, and in the last year of his reign we find him styling himself king of the Anglo-Saxons, and Cæsar of the whole of Britain. Dunstan was at Glastonbury when the message from his dying friend reached him, bidding him with all haste bring the royal treasure to Frome, where Edred was lying sick unto death. Quickly the treasurer hastened to comply with his friend's command, but as he rode towards Frome, it is said a heavenly vision warned him that all was over. Dunstan, on arriving, found the royal corpse already deserted by the courtiers, who had departed in haste to pay homage to the new king. With all reverence, he brought the dead king to

Glastonbury abbey, and laid him he loved so well, and served so faithfully, by the side of king Edmund, his brother.

King Edred, the last surviving brother of Athelstan, died childless, but his brother and predecessor, king Edmund, had left two children; the elder of these, Edwig, generally known as Edwy (by which name we shall call him), ascended the throne without opposition; his younger brother, Edgar, subsequently became one of the most famous sovereigns of the family of Alfred. Edwy reigned from 955 to 959, about three and a half years—a period of great confusion, in which little progress was made in the work of restoring life and vigour to the church. It is in this short reign of Edwy that the scenes of the well-known stories of the cruelty and harshness of Dunstan and archbishop Odo, are laid. Later historical investigations have, however, gone far to disprove the popular legends, so far at least as they have darkened the memory of the great churchman whose life and work we are now describing.

The true story of the tearing away of the boy-king from the arms of his bride Elgiva, and forcing him back to the rude and boisterous banquet, seems as follows. The "banquet" in question was the solemn coronation feast, at which the chief thanes and bishops, composing the Witan of England, were present. From this important gathering of the chief men of England Edwy had retired, preferring the society of Ethelgifu (Elgiva), with whom he was in love, and her mother. The thanes, archbishop, and bishops were indignant at this apparent insult, and commanded abbot Dunstan, the royal treasurer, and bishop Kynesige, of Lichfield, to fetch the foolish lad back to the coronation banquet. The Chronicle relates how the envoys found the boy-king with Elgiva and her mother, the splendid golden crown of the realm, gleaming with gems, tossed heedlessly on the floor. Reproachful and no doubt bitter words passed, and the young king returned with the abbot and bishop to the company of the great lords of the Witan. Edwy, however, never seems to have forgiven Dunstan for the part he bore in this transaction. He disgraced the treasurer and abbot, and drove him into exile, and had not Dunstan succeeded in escaping to Flanders, would, it is said, have put out his eyes.

The story and the chroniclers' dates now become somewhat confused. The archbishop of Canterbury persisted in denouncing the marriage of Edwy and Elgiva as against the law of the church, being within the prohibited canonical degrees.* Partly owing to this quarrel

* What the relationship actually was, is never stated. Some writers believe Elgiva to have been a first or second cousin; the majority of English historians seem to lean to the belief of Robertson, that her mother had been king Edwy's *foster*-mother, which would have been a sort of "spiritual" affinity very dear to the ecclesiasticism of that age. It seems incredible that any really direct relationship should not have been stated by the monk-chroniclers in justification of what followed; on the other hand, there is no doubt that strong popular feeling sided with the church, and against the king. These are really the two opposing arguments. It cannot even be positively affirmed whether or not Edwy and Elgiva were married at the feast of the coronation, or afterwards. The probability seems to be that the marriage was subsequent; but as the monkish chroniclers persistently write of Elgiva in opprobrious terms, on the ground that she could not be lawfully "married" at all, it is uncertain whether more than this be meant where the marriage is denied.

with the powerful church party, which was further accentuated by Edwy espousing the cause of the married clergy; partly owing, no doubt, to the removal of the strong and capable hand of Dunstan from the helm of the state, the Mercians—nothing loth to separate themselves from Wessex under their earl or alderman—and other great districts in the east of England, raised the standard of revolt against the young West Saxon king, and chose as their sovereign Edwy's brother, Edgar. Edwy was unable to resist, and an assembly or Witenagemot composed of West Saxons and Mercians agreed to separate England into two kingdoms; Wessex and the south remaining as Edwy's share, and the counties north of the Thames acknowledging Edgar as king. For a brief season the

DUNSTAN, EDWY, AND ELGIVA.

unity of England was thus broken. Edgar at once recalled Dunstan, and with the approval of the Witenagemot of Mercia and the Engles, appointed him bishop of Worcester, and shortly after bishop of London.

In the southern kingdom, Odo the archbishop continued his bitter opposition to the marriage of Edwy, and finally with an armed band arrested the queen Elgiva and conveyed her to Ireland. It is to be feared she was also branded in the face; but whether this barbarity was perpetrated or not, the transaction certainly presents Odo in the light rather of a fierce Viking warrior than of a Christian prelate. It is also a striking proof of the great power which the church had now obtained in the land, and of the growing disposition of its more active spirits to meddle energetically in secular affairs. The boy-king, fearing to lose the crown of his diminished kingdom, at length submitted to the archbishop's decree, and consented to a divorce. A horrible story is related by the chronicler Osbern, the precentor of Canterbury, who wrote a Life of St. Dunstan about a century and a half after Edwy's death, of more terrible cruelty being inflicted on the hapless divorced queen. She attempted, he says, to rejoin her husband; but was seized by her relentless enemies at Gloucester, and the muscles and sinews of her lower limbs cruelly severed, causing her death a few days later in terrible agony. The real truth concerning this pitiful story and the previous cruelty said to have been inflicted upon Elgiva, can perhaps never be now positively known; but there is certainly nothing on record which can connect Dunstan with the awful crime, save that men knew he was opposed to her marriage with king Edwy.* Nothing is known of his character that would lead us to regard him as either cruel or relentless; indeed Osbern the chronicler, the Canterbury precentor in the time of Lanfranc, who tells the dark story, relates, as an example of the forgiving and kindly nature of Dunstan, a curious anecdote of the saint's vision, in which he saw the soul of the dead Edwy tormented by fiends. Moved by exceeding pity, the saint wrestled with God in prayer until the dead king, who had driven him from Glastonbury into exile, was delivered from his ghostly enemies. This curious and striking legend is repeated by Eadmer of Canterbury, the biographer of the saintly

* The branding by Odo's orders appears nearly certain; no writer has seriously questioned it. In regard to the other horrible mutilation, it is first related by Osbern. Obviously he wrote from mere tradition; still it is *monkish* tradition, and a reason is added which lends too much probability to the story. The divorced queen had just eluded her guardians; and she was, it is said, now hamstrung that she might not be able to escape them again! We cannot forget that if the account is falsified, it is so falsified by ecclesiastics themselves, and subsequent writers repeated and gloried in the deed as meritorious. This is not only almost as revolting, but shows a feeling that makes the fact itself more probable. In regard, however, to personal responsibility for the tragedy, not only can Dunstan have hardly had anything to do with it, but it is doubtful if Odo was even alive when it was enacted. It is remarkable that in his life of Odo, Osbern says it was done by "men of the servants of God"; while in that of Dunstan he calls them simply "the people of the north." This rather seems to point to a deed of lynch-law by the Mercian church-party, excited no doubt by the church's denunciations, and perhaps by the example of the previous barbarity under Odo himself, and doubtless with the idea that they were saving the state from an imminent danger.

Anselm, who has also given us a life of archbishop Dunstan.

The death of the young king in 959 —some statements seem to imply his murder—put an end to the unhappy state of division in England, and Edgar, Edwy's brother, who had previously been chosen king of Mercia and the Engles, being received as sovereign in Wessex, ruled again over a united England. The general recognition of Edgar as king of England took place in 959. With his accession Dunstan's influence in church and state enormously increased.

The question of the succession to the primacy for a short time was doubtful. Odo had died when Edwy was still reigning in the south, and Edwy had nominated to the archbishopric Elfsige, a kinsman of his own, a man of great learning, but a violent and injudicious partisan. This Elfsige is reported to have treated the memory of Odo with studied disrespect during his short reign at Canterbury. He went, as was the general custom, to Rome to receive the pall, but never returned; for as he crossed the Alps in deep snow he caught the cold which put an end to his life. Edwy's short and disastrous career was not closed when the news came of his nominee's sudden death abroad, and Byrthelm, bishop of Wells, was appointed to the arch-see; but before the translation was completed, Edwy expired, and Dunstan's friend, Edgar, was on the throne. We hear no more of Byrthelm, who remained in his old diocese; and Dunstan was at once appointed primate, and received the pall without opposition from the hands of Pope John XII. at Rome in 960, the year after Edgar's accession. In 961 he consecrated several bishops, who had been his pupils or friends, to vacant sees; conspicuous among these were Ethelwold, the head of the Abingdon school, who became bishop of Winchester, and Oswald, a Dane, the nephew and favourite of Odo, a Benedictine monk of the famous monastery of Fleury on the Loire, who was made bishop of Worcester, afterwards becoming archbishop of York.

From the date of Edgar's accession Dunstan was the minister of the reign, the first of the many great ecclesiastical statesmen who have played such a prominent part in the history of England, and a visible token of the growing power and influence of the church, if also somewhat of its greater secularisation in aims and ideas. Nothing in the church or state was apparently done without the great archbishop's sanction. His hand appears in everything, and the peace and glory which the land enjoyed during the sixteen years of Edgar's rule were in a large measure owing to the wisdom and foresight of the statesman archbishop. "The rule of the realm was in the hands at once of Dunstan and of Edgar, and king and primate were almost blended together in the thoughts of Englishmen. So far, indeed, as their work could be distinguished, there was a curious inversion of parts. The king was seen devoting himself to the task of building up again the church, of diffusing monasticism, of fashioning his realm in accordance with a religious ideal." * No wonder that we find king Edgar lauded by monastic chroniclers. In the English Chronicle we read, "He upreared God's glory wide,

* Green: "Conquest of England."

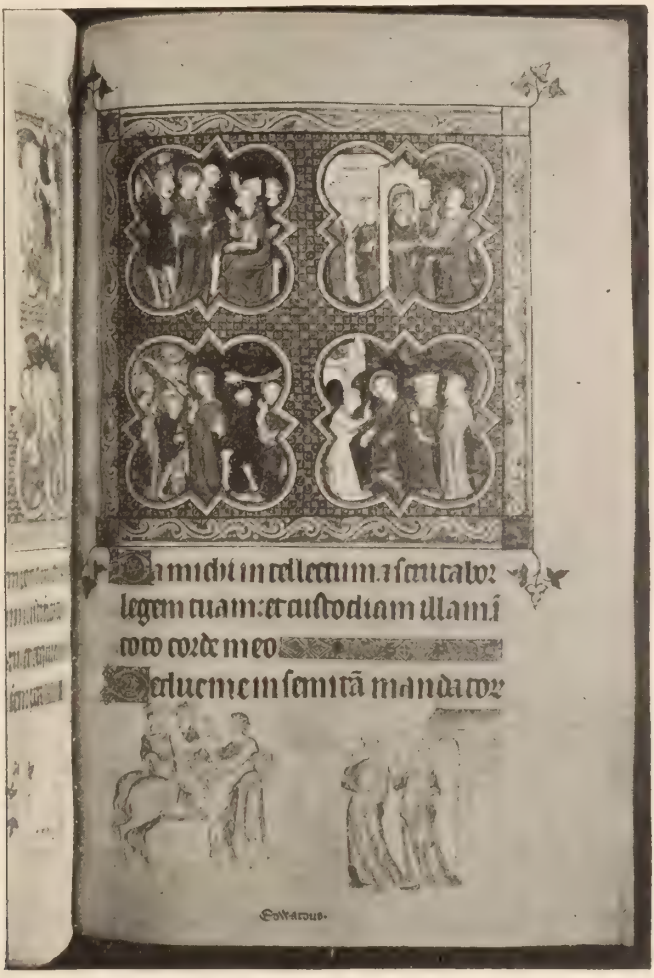
and loved God's law; he was wide throughout nations greatly honoured, because he honoured God's name earnestly." There appears, however, no doubt of the king's great licentiousness, of which various instances are related; and the penances by which they were visited have been by some recent writers contrasted with the treatment meted out to the ill-fated Edwy. On the other hand, the king's justice became celebrated even beyond his own dominions.

The characteristic of this remarkable reign of sixteen years was peace. For over a hundred and fifty years, with rare intervals, the land had been the scene of fierce warfare between Englishman and Dane; but the period of Edgar's rule, when Dunstan was the close friend, the minister, and almost sole adviser of the crown, is remembered as a period of almost unbroken quiet. The archbishop seems during much of this period to have principally busied himself with state matters, leaving religious administration and legislative and church work largely to the king. But indeed, during Edgar's reign, the king and the primate, his minister, worked hand in hand in church and state.

The strong wave of feeling in favour of a re-invigorated monasticism which in the tenth century, especially in its second half, swept over Europe, evidently strongly affected king Edgar. Tradition ascribes to him the foundation of forty monasteries. This number is probably exaggerated, but that Edgar was intensely in earnest in his desire to promote the interests of monasticism is absolutely certain; and in the coming days of its vast power and influence, monasticism looked back to the reign of Edgar as the beginning of its unbroken life in England. In his early youth it was said that Edgar had been moved by the sight of the ruined religious houses in different parts of the kingdom to make a vow of restitution; it is also not improbable, and would have been quite according to the ideas of that age, that his zeal may have been actually quickened by the personal profligacy to which allusion is made above, and which may have been sincerely repented of. Able prelates such as Oskytel, archbishop of York, the near kinsman of Odo; the half-mythical Thurkytel, abbot of Bedford, whom Crowland afterwards claimed as founder; Ethelwold, the disciple of Dunstan, bishop of Winchester; and Oswald, nephew of Odo, bishop of Worcester, and later archbishop of York, were all of one mind, all intensely anxious to breathe a fresh life into the church, and all convinced that the only sure road to the real reformation in life and practice they so longed to see lay through the introduction of the grave, ascetic rule of St. Benedict into all the great centres of church life in England.

They met with a considerable measure of success in the southern and midland districts. Many monasteries became homes of Benedictines, trained by men who had lived at Fleury, or Cluny, or in other famous reformed religious houses abroad. In the vast and Dane-ravaged arch-diocese of York, however, comparatively little was really effected, and it is doubtful if the Benedictine rule was ever firmly established in the north till after the Norman Conquest. The minster at York was never occupied by monks. But from the cathedrals and other more prominent centres of

church life generally, the work of expulsion of clerks, especially of married clerks, went on rapidly under king Edgar and his powerful Benedictine-loving counsellors.



THE MURDER OF KING EDWARD THE MARTYR.

(*From a 14th-century Psalter, formerly belonging to Queen Mary. British Museum.*)*

Curiously enough, Dunstan, who is popularly credited with being the principal instrument in this work of expulsion, which must have brought with it much suffering and hardship, was the least active in these severe measures. While we hear of clerks being banished from the monasteries of Mercia, of sweeping measures adopted in Winchester (Wessex), of new Benedictine foundations at Romsey, Exeter, in the great Fen abbeys, and in other places; in Canterbury, where

* The murder is depicted at the bottom of the page. The four illustrations at the top represent scenes in the Passion. The text is Psalm cxix. 34, 35.

Dunstan reigned as archbishop for some twenty-seven years, the clerks never seem to have been expelled to give place to monks, nor do we hear of the establishment of any Benedictine house in Kent. Clerks, indeed, remained at Canterbury till the time of archbishop Elfric, and it seems as if the great ecclesiastic was even in advance of his age in striving to inculcate the highest ideal of monastic life, while recognising that it might be too high for some, and desiring to deal gently with individual cases as he found them. Yet there is no doubt but that Dunstan himself was a monk. In the famous drawing * in the well-known manuscript in the Bodleian library, which with some probability is ascribed to his own hand, he appears at the feet of Christ in the dress of a monk. That he sympathised with the policy which substituted monks for clerks is also well-nigh certain, although he did not appear by any means to be prominent in the movement in which his own dearest friends and disciples were the leaders.

Dunstan and his school, of whom the bishops of Winchester and Worcester—the latter of whom was also archbishop of York—were the most conspicuous, succeeded in their efforts to infuse a new and nobler spirit into the Church of England. Education was enormously advanced among the clergy, and as a consequence of this new desire for knowledge among the teachers and spiritual guiders of the people, literature received a new and vigorous impulse. From the days of Dunstan we date the rise of the second old-English literature, the first, of course, dating from Alfred. It was a literature of poetry and prose; but the bulk of it consisted in popular prose. The school of Glastonbury, which Dunstan guided and inspired for so many years, and its daughter-school of Abingdon, under Dunstan's pupil Ethelwold, afterwards the bishop of Winchester, who was so active in forcing the clerks to give place to monks, were the two great educational centres.

This great impulse given to education and literature was Dunstan's noblest and most enduring work. He left the Church of England largely officered by monks and clerks, and quickened with a new desire for intellectual knowledge. The reproach of ignorance—apparently a self-satisfied ignorance—was wiped away by his restless life of self-sacrifice and brave, patient industry. The new monasticism, introduced rather by Dunstan's favourite disciples than by their master, but with which he sympathised, and the establishment of which he quietly assisted and helped during his seventeen years of almost supreme power, supplied a new and nobler ideal to the church. There is no doubt that the church Dunstan found in Wessex and Middle England was sadly lax in morality, self-indulgent, and quite unfit in those rough, rude times to guide and lead men. The Benedictine monk of the school of Fleury, Cluny, and other similar famous houses, with his rigid rule, his stern asceticism, his devoted self-denial, inspired with a new spirit that great church to which the England of king Edgar looked for guidance and direction.

King Edgar died in 975, and with the death of Edgar the work of the archbishop as a statesman was well-nigh done. Once

* Reproduced on p. 441.

more we see him at Glastonbury laying a royal master and friend to rest. He buried Edgar by his father Edmund's side. As for Dunstan himself, he survived his friend and sovereign for thirteen years. But troublous times followed the year which witnessed the death of Edgar the Peaceful. Edgar left two sons. In his will he designated the elder boy, Edward, as his successor, but the jealousy of the relations of the younger Ethelred, who was the son of his later marriage with Elfrida, excited fresh commotions. Dunstan supported the legal heir, Edward, and anointed and crowned him king. Two or three strife-filled years followed, and then the boy Edward was murdered (978). William of Malmesbury, the chronicler, who wrote shortly after the Norman Conquest, tells the well-known miserable story. Edward was returning home alone from the chase, when his step-mother Elfrida, the widowed queen of Edgar, caused him to be stabbed by a servant while he was drinking from the cup which she had handed to him. In spite of the deadly wound, the boy-king spurred his horse forward to join his companions ; but one foot slipping, he was dragged by the other through the winding paths of the wood, till his death was made known to his followers by the tracks of blood.

There was but little secrecy affected on the part of those who had arranged the king's murder. Edward was hurried to his grave at Wareham, no stately funeral marking the tragic passing away of a king of England. The queen-mother and her powerful kinsmen, in the name of the child Ethelred, the brother of the murdered Edward, with some colour of legality, seized upon the government of the realm. Within a year, however, that strong sense of justice and of reverence for the Lord's anointed which in all ages has more or less influenced the English people, awoke, and surrounded the memory of the dead boy, who on the threshold of a life which promised so fairly was so cruelly done to death, with the halo which belongs to a martyr, by which lofty title to honour—curiously misplaced in this case—Edgar's hapless eldest son, Edward, has ever been known in history. The remains of Edward "the Martyr," in obedience to a national cry of sorrow and remorse, were translated from their first humble resting-place at Wareham, and re-interred with kingly pomp in Alfred's royal abbey of Shaftesbury.

At one more imposing ceremony the well-known and honoured figure of the great archbishop was seen. In the solemn coronation of the boy Ethelred he officiated, and crowned the child of his old friend Edgar the Peaceful at Kingston, delivering to him a solemn charge—the *promissio Regis*, a reminder to be read in coming years of his duty to his people. It was laid upon the altar of Christ. This singular document is still with us. It begins: "This writing is written letter by letter after the writing that archbishop Dunstan delivered to our lord at Kingston on the day that they hallowed him king." It is short and to the point, and contains in a very few words the duty of a king to his subjects, closing with a reminder, perhaps suggested by the sight of the new men surrounding the child's throne ; "The duty of a hallowed king is . . . . that

he have old and wise and sober men for counsellors, and set righteous men for stewards, for whatsoever they do unrighteously by his fault, he must render account of it all in the judgment-day."

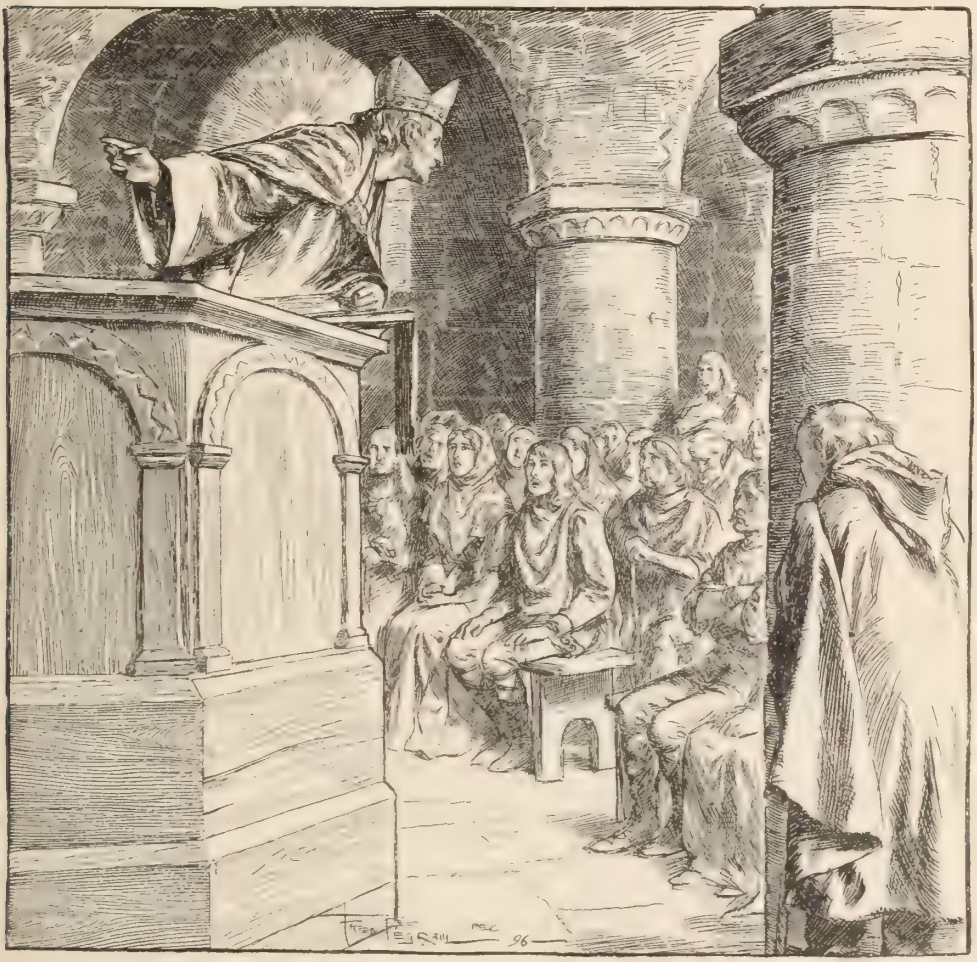
The story of Dunstan on the great stage of English politics ends with the coronation of Ethelred at Kingston. With great wisdom and dignity, the statesman-prelate recognised the situation, and seeing that other rulers had arisen who knew him not, and certainly did not love him, quietly stepped aside, and retiring to his own Canterbury, in comparative retirement spent the remaining years of a life which had worked for England so many and such beneficent works in church and state.

The picture of Dunstan's daily occupations at Canterbury after his retirement from the court, is drawn by the earliest of his biographers, writing within a few years of his death. "His chief employment was on the divine service, prayer and psalmody, and holy vigils; now and then he resumed the employments of his youth, exercising his old skill in handicraft in the making of musical instruments, like the organs which were kept at Malmesbury, or the bells that were known at Canterbury as his own work; the early hours of the morning he gave to the very needful task of correcting the faulty manuscripts of the library. The great domains of his church afforded him abundance of public work; it was his delight to make peace between man and man, to receive and assist the widows and fatherless, pilgrims and strangers of all sorts. He was an admirable steward of the church's wealth, a founder and endower of new churches, and indefatigable in the work of instruction, gathering young and old, men and women, clerk, monk and layman, to listen to his teaching."* "Thus"—in the words of the Saxon monk, who had personally known the saint and statesman—"all this English land was filled with his holy doctrine, shining before God and men like the sun and moon. When he was minded to pay to Christ the Lord the due hours of service, and the celebration of the Mass, with such entireness of devotion he laboured in singing, that he seemed to be speaking face to face with the Lord, even if just before he had been vexed with the quarrels of the people; like St. Martin, he kept eye and hand intent on heaven, never letting his spirit rest from prayer."

"The idea of the sketch is that of a good and faithful servant. There is nothing grotesque about the man as he appears in the pages of the eye-witness, nothing of the tyrannical ascetic, as historians have generally depicted him. It is the crowning of a laborious life, of a man who has had great power and has used it for his country, and, now that other rulers have arisen who do not know or love him, falls back on the studies of his youth, and spends his last years in the promotion of pious and learned works." We can then without any great stretch of imagination see the white-haired old bishop sitting with the children of his household, his counsellors and guests, by the fire in winter, and telling the little ones the story of his childhood as he told the elders the story of St. Edmund, king and martyr, which had been told him when a boy by the king's armour-bearer.

* Bishop Stubbs: Introduction to "Memorials."

"We must assign to Dunstan himself most of the marvellous tales of his earliest biographer (the Saxon priest who had known him face to face), such as the child's heard it. The several temptations of the Devil are also probably of Dunstan's telling —and possibly the various warnings that came to him at different times, of the



DUNSTAN'S LAST SERMON.

dream at his first visit to Glastonbury ; his vision of the mystic dove at Etheldreda's (his first patroness and friend) death ; the mysterious music of his harp as it hung against the wall, and the noble words which formed themselves in his mind as he death of his friends. All these stories bear the impress of the same mind, a mind slightly morbid and very sensitive, but pure and devout, void of grossness and grotesqueness. They seem to be stories for the children, told by one who had a strong

belief in dreams, and to be magnified and made important in the repetition, chiefly on account of the greatness of the narrator."*

The end to the quiet, beautiful life led during the last years of Dunstan's eventful career, came at last. No special illness seems to have carried him off—it was rather gradual decay. He was only sixty-four years of age, but the life had been a restless life of toil, and until the last few years, of grave anxiety and constant excitement. The close was sudden. The archbishop died, as most true men would choose to die, in harness, working to the last. His biographers with greater or less length dwell on the story of the end. As was naturally to be expected in a tenth or eleventh century story of such a one as Dunstan, his chroniclers tell us of some marvels accompanying the saint's death. But these can easily be separated from what is evidently a simple and true recital.

It was on Ascension Day, 988, that the signs of the rapidly-approaching end first showed themselves; but although evidently weak and suffering, he went through all his accustomed duties in his great Canterbury church—consecrating and distributing the blessed elements as usual. Thrice on that solemn day he ascended the pulpit and spoke to the people with his old passionate fervour and eloquence, dwelling on the mystic event the holy festival of the Ascension commemorated, and pressing home to the listening people the power of the precious blood, and telling them that no sinner, however terrible, however numerous his sins, need despair of forgiveness if he only had the Mediator to plead for him—

* Bishop Stubbs: "Memorials of St. Dunstan."

"preaching," said the evidently faithful tradition, "as he had never preached before." "*Evangelizavit, qualiter numquam ante evangelizavit*," says Adelard, writing only some twenty years after the event.

He never appeared again in public, preserving, however, his full consciousness and power of speech to the last. On the morning of the Sabbath following the Ascension Day, when he celebrated and preached his last remarkable sermon, after the matin hymns were finished, he bade the holy congregation of the brethren come to him. Again commending his spirit, he received from the heavenly table the viaticum of the sacrament of Christ which had been celebrated in his presence, and giving thanks to God for it, he began to sing: "The merciful and gracious Lord hath so done his marvellous works that they ought to be had in remembrance. He hath given meat unto them that fear Him." And with these words in his mouth, rendering his spirit into his Maker's hands, he rested in peace. "Oh, too happy whom the Lord found thus watching!"*

On the Sunday he was buried in the church that he loved so well. His grave was apparently in the undercroft, beneath the choir, deep in the ground, at his head the matin altar. In after years the choir was burnt and rebuilt, and the body of Dunstan was removed. The coffin containing the sacred remains was opened, and the vestments with which the body was clothed were found to be decayed. He was clothed anew and laid in a wooden coffin enclosed in a leaden one and banded with iron, and was re-interred in a stone tomb on the south side of the high altar.

* Adelard: "Vita Sancti Dunstani," xi.

In the last year of the reign of king Henry VII. (1508), archbishop Warham, some five centuries after Dunstan's death, wishing to verify the tradition that the sainted remains had been deposited in Canterbury and not at Glastonbury, as the monks of that famous house loved to assert, caused the tomb to be opened. In a letter of Warham to the abbot of Glastonbury, dated in June, 1508, after describing the small wood chest, upright like a tomb, and girt with iron, situated on the south side of the high altar, in which the body of Dunstan was said to be lying, the archbishop writes: "On its being opened, we found within it a certain leaden cist, and underneath, inside, a single small piece of lead a foot long, on which was engraved, 'Hic requiescit Sanctus Dunstanus, Archiepiscopus.' There, within the same cist were found pieces of linen, very white, redolent, as it were, with the odour of balsam; these being unrolled, we discovered the skull of the said saint, entire, and the different bones of his body, with many other similar relics." It was just 520 years from the date of his death that Warham looked on the mouldering relics of Dunstan. In the longer report of the "Scrutinium" made by the archbishop Warham and the lord prior of Canterbury, the remains of Dunstan are curiously termed "illud sanctissimum organum Spiritus Sancti indutum pontificalibus, tum pro magna parte consumptis." The small piece of lead above referred to with the inscription "Hic requiescit," etc., is represented as resting on the breast of the saint's body.

Round the memory of Dunstan many legends quickly gathered. He was soon credited with having performed many miracles. He was spoken of not merely as a worker of supernatural acts, but the reputation clave to him of having been, too, a seer and a prophet. As remarked by the learned historian we have already so frequently quoted, he was canonised in popular regard almost from the day he died, and was certainly the favourite saint of the Church of England for more than a century and a half; and when, after that long period, he gave place in popular regard to another saint and national hero, the new object of veneration was no less a personage than Thomas à Becket, who won his unexampled and enduring place in the hearts of the people less from his reputation for sanctity, than because he had been the champion of the church against a king who was credited with the wish to trample under foot its sacred privileges. A'Becket owed his enormous popularity to the fact that he died defending a church which the people loved. That the memory of Dunstan maintained its place in the hearts of the English so long, and then only yielded it to so great a memory as that of the martyr archbishop, is a singularly high testimony to the surpassing merits of the man; for, as it has been well said, "popular worship has not been usually wasted on the memory of selfish ascetics."

Of that strange and mistaken worship of saints which the mediæval church fostered with a touching care, the cult of Dunstan is a memorable instance. It is undeniable that the greatest thinkers, the profoundest theologians, the most pious as well as the most learned, for many ages

assumed that the departed spirits of the blessed possessed a special access to the presence of the Most High, and that their prayers were listened to with a peculiar favour by God and His Christ. A long and remarkable supplication of the holy Anselm is still extant, in which that true scholar and saint implores St. Dunstan's intercession at the throne of grace. He addresses the blessed saint in glory as "Dulcis ad invocandum, benignus ad exaudiendum pius ad subveniendum." "Most readily," whispers Anselm in the course of this strange sad prayer, "will the Judge Himself bestow whatever a loved and cherished friendship like yours shall ask of Him." We possess prayers of various dates offered to, and hymns sung in honour of, this loved Englishman, as a specimen of this passionate adulation. One hymn, written early in the eleventh century, begins thus :

> "Ave Dunstane, præsulum,
> Sidus decusque splendidum
> Lux vera gentis Anglicæ,
> Et ad Deum dux prævie."

One of the two earliest lives of Dunstan—that by Adelard, written certainly within twenty years of the saint's death—is drawn up in the form of "lessons" to be read in the services of the great monastery at Canterbury. This "devotional" work on Dunstan was rapidly multiplied, and was the source from which the breviary lessons for St. Dunstan's day were mainly taken. So general and widespread was the worship of the beloved Anglo-Saxon saint, that we find in the various missals used in the services of the mediæval Church of England, special masses arranged to be said or sung on St. Dunstan's anniversary. These became, in fact, a part of the ordinary ritual for that day, not only in his own archiepiscopal seat of Canterbury, but in all the great churches of the land. The mass on St. Dunstan's day, "Missa Sancti Dunstani Episcopi et Confessoris," slightly varied in the different uses, appears in the missals of Salisbury, York, and Hereford, and is found in copies of different dates until, comparatively speaking, quite late times, the breviaries which contained them bearing such dates as Rouen, A.D. 1492 ; Rouen, A.D. 1502 ; Paris, A.D. 1533.

The materials for the picture of the life and work of this eminent servant of the Church of England are, taking into consideration the circumstances, fairly rich. We possess five distinct Lives of Dunstan. The first was by a nameless Saxon priest, whom the learned Mabillon the Benedictine believes was Byrhtferth, a pupil of Abbo of Fleury, one of the most eminent English scholars of the time. He wrote some twelve or thirteen years after the archbishop's death, and had been an eye-witness of some of the events belonging to Dunstan's later life. Much of what he relates, he tells us, was based on what he heard from Dunstan's own mouth. This "Life" is much richer in what may be termed events belonging to the private or home life of the saint than to his public and official career. On the latter it is not difficult to comprehend the comparative reticence of Dunstan, who was living in retirement—in an honourable retirement, it is true—but none the less in a kind of state disgrace. Those ministers and advisers who surrounded the young king were no friends to the old minister who

ST. DUNSTAN AT THE FEET OF CHRIST. (*Bodleian Library, Oxford.*)

[The writing, "Dunstanum memet," etc., was probably written by Dunstan himself: but whether the picture was drawn by him is more doubtful.]

was once all-powerful. The picture presented by this earliest biographer is thus most valuable as regards his inner life and more personal recollections.

The second Life of Dunstan is that of Adelard, and is dated only a very few years later than the first biography. In the few years which had now elapsed—some twenty—since the saint's death, the legends of the marvellous had grown luxuriantly round the memory of Dunstan. Here we find related most of the more startling marvels that are commonly associated with his name. Passing by those grotesque and well-known stories of his conflict with the Evil One, it will be interesting to quote one of these stories of the marvellous told by Adelard, to which the monks in after days listened with attention and pleasure. It was on the night preceding that last feast of the Ascension, two days before the saint's death, that Alfgar, afterwards bishop of Elmham, saw in a vision a number of cherubim and seraphim filling the minster in which the holy Dunstan was officiating. The heavenly band drew near the saint. "Are you ready, Dunstan," asked one of the angel visitors, "to join our heavenly choir on the festal day of Christ's enthronisation?" To which the archbishop replied, "I cannot come, for this is the day on which Christ ascended to the heavens, and I must speak to His people and communicate with them in the sacrament." Then said the heavenly one, "Be ready on the Sabbath (two days later) to come with us, for you will have to sing with us for ever and for ever, 'Holy, holy, holy!'"

The third "Life" was not written until after the Norman Conquest. Its author was Osbern, precentor of the cathedral of Christ Church, Canterbury, in the time of archbishop Lanfranc. A good deal of what is told in the two earlier records is repeated, but with a still larger admixture of the marvellous. We find in Osbern's memoir not a few of those legends of the saint which from their grotesque character have caught the attention of later and more sceptical generations, and have sadly and unjustly disfigured his great memory—such legends as how Dunstan seized the Devil by the nose, how he saw the soul of his enemy, King Edwy, carried off by devils. The story of the dreadful mutilation of the hapless queen Elgiva is told also by this comparatively late biographer.

Among these stories of the popular saint, part of which no doubt have some foundation, there are of course beautiful gems—such as the dream of the writer who once in sore trouble visited Dunstan's tomb in the dead of the night, and afterwards in his chamber saw a vision of a palace of exquisite beauty; to reach it he had to pass through a flood of waters; then entering the fair house he had been gazing at from afar, he found it brilliantly lighted with a light brighter than the sun; within the house were many saints assembled, each wearing a strangely joyous expression. "I kept thinking," said the dreamer of the dream, "about the brilliancy of that dazzling light, and at last it occurred to me that the marvellous radiance proceeded from the bodies of the assembled saints. On inquiring who these all were, I learned they were the company of the great Dunstan, who had only a little time before been with them and had celebrated the divine sacrament, and had bidden them wait till he returned." To the high estima-

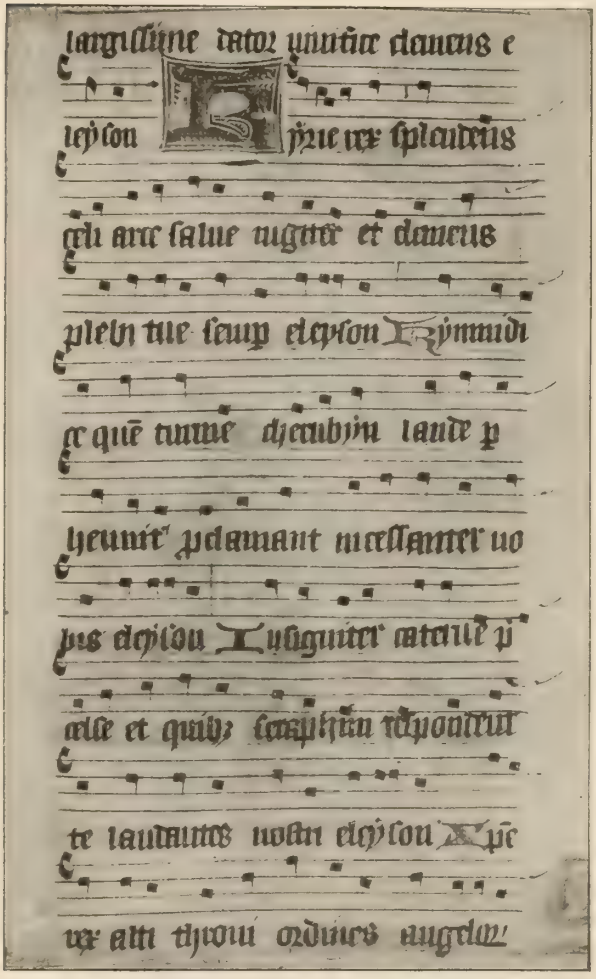
tion in which Dunstan, the *Saxon* saint, was held in the Church of England even in *Norman* days, such recitals as the above, occurring, as they do, in the work of the precentor of the Norman Lanfranc's cathedral, bear clear testimony.

The fourth and fifth "Lives," composed respectively by Eadmer, the biographer of Anselm, and William of Malmesbury, give us but few fresh details of the great churchman once so loved in England.

Strangely enough, we possess no writings whatever which can be with any certainty ascribed to Dunstan himself; nothing has survived—not even a letter. It would seem that this great ecclesiastic, profound scholar, devoted and able teacher, cunning craftsman, trained musician, consummate statesman, able and eloquent preacher, was no writer. The ecclesiastical laws, which will be dwelt upon presently, are of considerable importance, and throw a strong, clear light upon the state of the church under Dunstan's rule; but while these bear the evident impress of his mind, and, no doubt, were his exclusive work, they do not bear his name, but are termed "Canons made in king Edgar's reign." The well-known hymn, "Kyrie Rex Splendens," which, according to the "Salisbury use," is appointed to be sung at his festival after the "officium," is traditionally said to have been dictated by Dunstan. Eadmer in his life of the saint, tells how one Sunday at mass the archbishop fell asleep, and as he slept, heard a solemn service in heaven; awaking, he dictated to his servants the hymn in question, the words of which he had heard in his dream.

That Dunstan was one of the greatest and most remarkable of the Anglo-Saxon churchmen, is conceded even by those whose estimate of his character is very different from that painted by the present writer. For centuries the monk-historians were in the habit of painting Dunstan as one of the noblest and purest figures in the story of the Church of England; as one who in a singular degree had won the special favour of the Most High; as one who on earth had been permitted to exercise powers not usually granted to the ordinary sons of men, and who, after death, was privileged to approach the throne of God laden with the blessed burden of prayers and supplications which had been offered by men still engaged in the battle of life. In the great reaction which followed the downfall of the monastic orders, the motto, "*incende quod adorâsti*" ("Burn what thou hast been adoring"), has been in countless cases only too faithfully followed. The perhaps rather "indiscriminate mediæval adoration" of the great statesman and church reformer, has been changed into "the most hateful detraction"; and the student of English church history has been taught, alike in the manuals of his child-days, as in the graver and more scientific histories of his country, rather to loathe than to revere the memory of Dunstan. This popular view, expounded to a former generation at great length by scholars like Sharon Turner, has been stereotyped in quite late times by the bitter and caustic words even of writers of the first rank, such as Milman, the learned and eloquent dean of St. Paul's, and Hallam, the justly esteemed historian of the Middle Ages. The words of the former deserve to be quoted as supplying a good summary

of this popular view :—"Dunstan's life was a crusade—a cruel, unrelenting, yet but partially successful crusade against the married clergy, which, in truth, comprehended the whole secular (non-monastic) clergy of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom. Dunstan was, as it were, in a narrower sphere, among a ruder people, a prophetic type and harbinger of Hildebrand (Pope Gregory VII.). Like Hildebrand, in the spirit not of a rival sovereign, but of an iron-hearted monk, he trampled the royal power under his feet. The scene at the coronation of king Edwy, excepting the horrible cruelties of which it was the prelude, and which belong to a more barbarous race, might seem to prepare mankind for the humiliation of the emperor Henry IV. at Canossa." * Hallam formed the same low estimate.



MS. OF THE HYMN, "KYRIE REX SPLENDENS."
(From a Latin Antiphonary according to the "Salisbury use." Early 15th century. British Museum.)

Modern research has reversed the judgment so vehemently expressed by English writers of the post-Reformation period. Dean Hook, in his Life of Dunstan, though with some hesitation, declines to endorse the old popular view. Green, by ignoring the stock pieces of accusation, shows how cheaply he estimated them, and sketches Dunstan as one of the great "makers of England." Freeman, with no uncertain voice, unhesitatingly adopts the ancient and monastic estimate of the statesman-archbishop, and in a remarkable paragraph thus gives his view : "Dunstan, a name known to too many readers only as the subject of one of the silliest of monastic legends, stands forth" (he is speaking of the glorious reign of Edgar) "as the

* The lines of the stave are in red.

* Milman : "Latin Christianity."

leading man in church and state. As the minister of Edred and Edgar, as the Jehoiada or Seneca who watched over the still harmless childhood of the second Ethelred, Dunstan is entitled to lasting and honourable renown." Dr. Stubbs (Bishop of Oxford), in his edition of the ancient lives of Dunstan,* thus comments on the sweeping charges brought by Milman, quoted above: "For this invective, there is not in the writing of contemporaries, or in any authentic remains of Dunstan's legislation, the shadow of a foundation. What Dunstan did at Edwy's coronation he did by the order of the assembled Witan of the kingdom. The cruelties which are said to have followed are asserted on the authority of Osbern and Eadmer, the earlier of whom wrote nearly a century and a half after the death of Edwy, and depend on no other testimony. If ever they took place at all, they took place during Dunstan's exile. The charge of persecuting the married clergy is equally baseless."

* It is mainly to this edition of the ancient Lives of Dunstan, by Bishop Stubbs, of Oxford, and the masterly introduction prefixed to them, that the student is most indebted for the true estimate of this great churchman. Various direct references are made above to these "Memorials," published in the great series issued under the direction of the Master of the Rolls; and the writer of this history gratefully records his thanks for the light thus thrown by the eminent Oxford scholar upon a most important, but little known period of the history of our Church.

TRADITIONAL SITE OF DUNSTAN'S TOMB,
BY THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE HIGH ALTAR, IN CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.

(*The diaper work on the right is supposed to mark the spot.*)

CHAPTER XX.

THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH AT THE END OF THE TENTH CENTURY.

The "Canons" of Dunstan concerning Priests—Churches—Lay People—Archbishop Ethelgar—Siric—Elfric—Alphege The "Laws of Ethelred"—Decrees of the Council of Enham—Capture of Alphege by the Danes—His Martyrdom—The Homilies of Elfric—Their Importance—Doctrine of Radbertus concerning the Real Presence—The Controversy—Elfric His Paschal Homily and its Teaching—Probable Indebtedness to it of Hooker—Elfric's Epistle still clearer—Elfric's Doctrine traceable to the School of York and its great Teachers—Use of Latin in the Church—Translations—Marriage—Sunday Observance—Ordination of Bishops—of Priests—Marriage—Trial by Ordeal.

THE discipline and practice of the Church of England in the times of Odo and Dunstan, when Edgar and the princes of the illustrious line of Alfred were reigning, show that no little attention was paid to order and duty in the church. We get some insight into the inner life of the clergy, and we gather some knowledge of what was expected from them, from the "Canons" of Dunstan. The exact date of this interesting and curious document is uncertain. Its title, "Canons made in king Edgar's reign," only tells us that it must have been put out during the time of Dunstan's great influence as the minister and principal adviser of the crown. The "canons" are mostly concerned with the life and duties of the clergy;* but there are certain things specially enjoined upon the Christian laity.

The clergy, who are addressed as "God's servants," are charged diligently to perform their service and ministry to God, and to intercede for all Christian folk. They are enjoined to be faithful and obedient to their superiors in the church, and this faithfulness and truth is also to be shown in their relations to the state. Loyalty to their *earthly* lords is a part of their duty. Every year they are to meet in synod. There they are to make reports as to the conduct of the people under their charge, as to their behaviour to their spiritual guides, as to their bearing towards the church; particularly to note any man in their peculiar district who had fallen into any mortal crime. A curious direction appears in the matter of their attendance at their yearly synod. The clergy are to carry with them their vestments and service books for divine ministration, and to bring their ink and parchment for writing down any instructions they might receive there. This last shows that at least all clergy were expected to be able to write freely and with ease. They were to carry no lawsuits between each other before secular courts. Their own order must supply judges in such matters. Particularly were they warned against haughtiness towards other men. "Let no noble-born priest despise one of less noble birth, for all men were of one origin." This direction tells us that a fair proportion at least of the clergy belonged to the class of nobles and thanes in these days, and reminds us that the service of the church was by no means despised

* Compare Dean Hook: "Lives of the Archbishops—Dunstan."

among the higher ranks of the Anglo-Saxons: no slight indication, in such war-loving days, of the power and influence of the church.

The priest in Dunstan's administration must avoid field sports. "He must be no hunter or hawker"; he was to avoid games of chance; "he must be no player of dice, but must divert himself with a book, as becometh his order." Again and again we find study and reading enjoined upon the clergy of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Strangely enough, the priest in the church presided over by Dunstan is never warned against marriage. Indeed, Dunstan himself seems to have behaved with extreme gentleness in this, one of the burning questions of the time. Only a quiet reminder appears, urging the priest "not to love too much the company of women, but to love his lawful wife—that is, his church." The clergy are to guard themselves against over-drinking, and to teach the same to other men: drunkenness evidently seems to have been a besetting sin among the people. They were to be the teachers of the people. Special directions are given respecting the scholars they were to receive. Manual arts were not to be neglected in their schools. Dunstan himself we know was no mean artificer in gold and silver, and was also an artist. This working with the hands as well as with the brain is again dwelt upon, in the exhortation that the priest was diligently to instruct the youth, and to dispose them to trades.

Very stringent are the injunctions respecting the reverent use of the churches. These were to be rigidly kept for divine ministration and for pure services, and for no other purpose. Mass was to be celebrated only in the church. The only exception was in the case of extreme sickness, and even then mass was never to be celebrated without a hallowed altar. The greatest care, too, was to be taken in the solemn ritual. No priest was ever to celebrate mass without a book being before his eyes, "lest he mistake," and to preserve this extreme accuracy, every priest was to take great care to have a good book—at least, a true one. Fasting was directed before partaking of the housel, or sacrament, except in the event of extreme sickness. The housel, or sacrament, was to be always in readiness; it was to be kept with diligence and purity, and if it became stale, was to be burnt in a clear fire, and the ashes were to be put under the altar. Vestments were to be worn whenever the priest celebrated mass. The chalice in which the housel, or sacrament, was hallowed was to be of metal-molten, never of wood. All things near the altar or belonging to the church were to be very cleanly and decently ordered. A light was always to be burning in the church when mass was being sung. The hours of service were to be notified by ringing the bells of the church; and lastly, no mass-priest or minister-priest was ever to come within the church door or into his stall without a stole.

Dunstan's "canons" were in their variety of practical detail far-reaching; they also insisted upon a uniform ritual, and even upon a uniform way of reading in church—no doubt to avoid irreverence or carelessness in these most important particulars. "All the priests must use the same practice in relation to the service of the church,

and keep an equal pace in the church service through the course of the year." Alms were to be collected and "distributed as both to render God propitious and to dispose the people to alms-deeds." Baptism was to be regularly administered; it was to be given as soon as it was desired, and never delayed beyond thirty-seven nights. And no one was to remain too long unbishoped—that is, unconfirmed.

The injunctions or advice to *lay people* contained in these "canons" of Dunstan were, as might be expected, less numerous, and of a more general nature. Not a few of them evidently belonged to a people in whose families, more or less, pagan rites were familiarly practised and pagan traditions were honoured. With the Danish settlements under Guthrun, and other Vikings in the days of Alfred, and later, this strong pagan element in the country is easy to account for. Every Christian man, for instance, was diligently to win his child to Christianity and to teach him the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. Every man was to be expert in saying the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, as he desired to lie in holy ground or to be judged worthy of the housel (the sacrament). On holy-days men were to give up heathenish songs and diabolical sports. On Sundays they were to abstain from markets and the county courts. On festival and fast days oaths and the ordeal were to be forborne. Temperance was especially urged upon all entering within the walls of a church. No man was to expect to be buried in church unless he were known in his lifetime to have pleased God. They were to remember to be just in tithing and other matters. A curious charge appears, evidently directed against some heathen Danish rite, that no Christian was to taste blood. In the direction that no woman was to come near the altar when mass was being sung, the influence of the monkish training of Dunstan appears. Such a bias was rarely seen in Dunstan's policy after he had risen to a position of supreme authority. We also find in these "canons" directions as to reverent burial of the dead.

The story of Ethelgar, Dunstan's successor in the primacy of the Church of England, well illustrates the policy and spirit of the great archbishop, who had done so much to rekindle life and vigour in the church during the reign of Edgar and his immediate predecessors. Ethelgar received his education at Glastonbury, where Dunstan had so long presided. He became a Benedictine monk in the well-known educational house of Abingdon under Ethelwold, the famous and austere disciple of Dunstan. This Ethelwold, it will be remembered, was subsequently bishop of Winchester, and was notorious as the leader in the Church of England of the violent proceedings which were, later, to eject the married clerks from the religious houses and minster churches, and to replace them with Benedictine monks. In these severe and often cruel acts Ethelwold went far beyond the example, and perhaps the wishes of Dunstan. Ethelgar was a favourite pupil of Ethelwold, who appointed him abbot of Newminster at Winchester. But he also never appears to have sympathised with the stern measures of his master, Ethelwold, and when in the year 980 he was, through Dunstan's influence, appointed to the bishopric

of Selsey, during his eight years of rule in the South Wessex diocese, he allowed the secular clergy of the Selsey cathedral church to remain undisturbed in their advance and foster true monasticism in her bosom, and with it the cause of education; but his wise and gentle conduct in not displacing the Selsey clerks showed

ABBOT PRESENTING A BOOK OF PRAYER TO THE MONASTERY OF ST. AUGUSTINE, SHOWING THE DRESS OF ABBOT AND ARCHBISHOP, FROM A 10TH CENTURY MS.*
(*From Strutt's Dress and Habits of the English People.*)

offices. His appointment to the see of Canterbury showed that the wise, conciliatory policy of Dunstan was by many desired to be the dominant policy of the church. As a Benedictine monk, there would be no question as to his desire to that as primate he had no intention of changing the quiet policy of Dunstan in the matter of the clerks and secular clergy

* This MS., now in the British Museum, was formerly in the possession of the monastery of St. Augustine.

of Canterbury, and in other places where the authority and influence of the archbishop was dominant. But Ethelgar, unfortunately, died within a year of his translation to the arch-see.

His successor in the primacy was another pupil of Glastonbury, who through Dunstan's influence had been preferred to the abbot's chair of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, and later, through the same influence, in the year 985 had been chosen bishop of the small see of Ramsbury, a Wessex bishopric founded by archbishop Plegmund, in the days of Alfred. Siric was a great scholar, and collected a precious library, which he bequeathed to the metropolitan cathedral. Once more we find the archbishop one of the advisers of the crown: not perhaps a very wise one, for to Siric's advice is credited Ethelred's fatal policy of continually purchasing a temporary peace from the Viking invaders. The first of the many of these shameful ransoms, through Siric's advice was paid after the great defeat of the Anglo-Saxon forces at Maldon, so graphically painted in the poem we find in the Saxon Chronicle. He seems, from the scant notice of the Worcester Chronicle, to have been a foe to the secular clergy, and to have introduced monks into Canterbury. He died, however, after a brief episcopate of some four or five years, leaving a reputation of being a great scholar and patron of learning; but something more was needed for one filling his great office in those troublous days of Ethelred the Unready.

In the story of the Church of England, Siric the scholar will be ever remembered owing to his having adopted and sanctioned the famous *Homilies* of Elfric, as authoritative pieces of theology. The immediate reason of their public adoption by the archbishop seems to have been as follows. In the "canons" of Dunstan, promulgated some years previously, directions were given to the English clergy that a sermon should be preached every Sunday. The extreme difficulty of providing this sermon evidently pressed hardly upon many of the Anglo-Saxon priests. To lighten this burden, Siric allowed a collection of homilies, to which he gave the full weight of his archiepiscopal sanction, to be read instead of the prescribed sermon in all the churches of the land. The homilies in question were composed by Elfric, a very learned monk of Abingdon, a pupil of the notorious bishop Ethelwold of Winchester, and who under Ethelwold became a most distinguished teacher and writer at Winchester. To these homilies and other writings of Elfric, and their extreme importance in the history of the Church of England, we shall presently refer more particularly.

Siric was followed at Canterbury by Elfric the grammarian, the author of the Homilies, who at the time of his election was bishop of Ramsbury. The policy of Siric in replacing the secular clergy was steadily continued by Elfric. During his episcopate (994 to 1006), some twelve years, the terror of the Danish invasion brooded over England—an ever-darkening cloud. Assuming with the latest scholarly writers* the identity of Elfric the grammarian with Elfric the archbishop of Canterbury, his chief title to honour is his profound scholarship. "In him we see the type of

* Dean Hook: "Lives of the Archbishops." Freeman: "The Norman Conquest."

the religious and educational populariser. He aids the raw teacher with an English grammar of Latin. He helps the unlearned priest by providing for him eighty English homilies as a course of teaching for the year. He assists bishop Wulfsine and archbishop Wulfstan by furnishing them with pastoral letters to their clergy. His homilies were so greedily read, that his admirers begged from him some English lives of the saints; and the prayer of a friend, Ethelweard, drew him into editing and writing an English version of the Bible, which, omitting some parts, as he judged, unedifying for the times, he carried on from Genesis to the Book of Judges." * The Saxon Chronicle thus quaintly writes of him: "In this year, 995, archbishop Sigaric died, and Elfric, bishop of Wiltshire, was chosen on Easter day at Amesbury by king Ægelred (Ethelred) and by all his Witan. This Elfric was a very wise man, so that there was no sager man in England, and when he came thither he was received by those men in orders, who were most unacceptable to him, that was, by clerks." He died in 1006, and was buried in his loved monastic school of Abingdon.

Elfric's successor, Elfheah, generally known in ecclesiastical history as Alphege, occupies one of the more prominent places in the roll of great archbishops. Elfric was a scholar and a theologian of the highest class, and his writings have influenced the teaching of the Church of England in a way probably quite undreamed of by him or his contemporaries; but as a statesman or a churchman he was comparatively little heard of in this age of war and sorrow. Not so the man who followed him in the chair of St. Augustine. Alphege was no recluse scholar. It was in the gloomiest period of Ethelred's unhappy reign that Elfric died. The vengeance of Sweyn for the massacre of St. Brice's day had reduced the whole country to the extreme of misery. Every shire in Wessex was scarred with flame and desolation. It was under such circumstances that Alphege (the Benedictine monk of Deerhurst, the bishop of Winchester) was called to preside over the English church.

"His virtues were those which at that time were specially admired and esteemed. He was inflexible and stern, abundant in alms-deeds, and a rebuker of the rich; severe to others but severer to himself, the reality of his asceticism being testified by his very appearance. It was told of him that in winter he would rise at midnight, and, issuing unseen from his house, would kneel, exposed to the chill night air, while praying barefoot without his coat. Flesh he never touched, except on extraordinary occasions; his body was so attenuated that it is said when he held up his hand the light was seen through it. The people, in despair, not knowing where to look for human help, and feeling that they deserved the Divine malediction, hailed the election of Alphege to the see of Canterbury with one burst of applause. He was translated from Winchester; on his departure from which see, all Hampshire escorted him to the borders of the county, and his entrance to Canterbury was like the entrance of a victorious general." *

During this period of disaster and

* Green: "Conquest of England."

* Hook: "Lives of the Archbishops."

suffering there is no doubt that the church exerted a great and beneficent influence over the lives of men. "The nation was deeply religious; the church was deeply national." Side by side, in the great popular assemblies, sat the bishops and the aldermen, and the legislation of king Ethelred, framed in the intervals of quiet, shows how deep and far-reaching was the influence of the church in the early years of the eleventh century.

After the elevation of Alphege to the archbishopric there were several intervals of comparative quiet—notably during the years 1008 and 1009. Some of the important legislation, generally known as "the laws of Ethelred," belongs certainly to this period, and throws considerable light upon the state of public feeling at this time, and reminds us how powerfully the church under such a ruler as Alphege influenced men's minds. "The whole of one of the statutes or collections of these laws, reads like an act of penitence on the part of a repentant nation, awakened by misfortune to a sense of national sins. Heathenism is to be cast out, an ordinance which shows what had been the effect of the Danish invasions. . . . Punishments were to be mild; death especially is to be sparingly inflicted. Christian and innocent men are not to be sold out of the land. . . . All church dues are to be regularly paid, and all festivals to be regularly kept, especially the festival of the newest English saint, the martyred king Edward (king Ethelred's brother). The whole is wound up with a pious and patriotic resolve of real and impressive solemnity. The nation pledges itself to fidelity to God and the king. It will worship one God, and be true to one royal lord. It will manfully and with one accord defend life and law, and will pray earnestly to God Almighty for His help." *

Somewhat later are the decrees which we possess of the undated Council of Enham. Many of the above enactments are repeated; and while a spirit of ecclesiasticism runs through them, it is that noble ecclesiasticism which, while endeavouring to enforce a pure and patriotic rule of life, believes that only under the guidance of the church is such a rule of life likely to be carried out. The earnest and self-denying archbishop Alphege was evidently one, if not the principal, of the wise and patriotic men who dictated such legislation.

The death of Alphege was a fitting close to the life of this remarkable man. In the year 1011, in the month of September, in the course of their destructive raids—raids, which, as the years of Ethelred's fatal reign drew towards their close, became more and more terrible—a Viking army appeared before Canterbury. After twenty days of siege the city was betrayed, and the Danes entered the unhappy city as conquerors. We have four accounts of this mournful episode, which among many dread events of these unhappy days stands out with a sad prominence, owing to the exalted rank and the high character of the principal sufferer. The earlier accounts are silent as to any general massacre, or as to the horrible barbarities dwelt on with such passion by Florence of Worcester and by Osbern, the precentor of Canterbury under the Norman Lanfranc. The Chronicles give a picture only of plunder and captivity, and

* Freeman: "Norman Conquest."

tell us how, when the Danes had searched the city thoroughly, they went to their ships with their booty and their captives, amongst whom was the archbishop Alphege. But harrowing details of the slaughter and burning of the citizens, of children being tossed on spears, and of other horrors not, alas! unknown in those terrible Danish wars, are dwelt upon in detail by the writers Florence and Osbern. It is possible that some exaggeration may mar these accounts, written about a hundred years after the event, but terrible suffering and many deaths were without doubt the result of such a capture by the Viking invaders. A great ransom was demanded by the Danes as the price of the release of the archbishop. This at first

ALPHEGE BROUGHT BEFORE THE DANES.

he promised to pay, and the Danes, in expectation of receiving it, kept him in close captivity in their ships. His friends were willing and anxious to pay the ransom demanded, offering to sell the church plate throughout the province to make up the required sum. But Alphege refused to allow any such sacrifice to be made for him. "Nothing," he said, "should be paid for him. He had sinned in promising a ransom. The treasures belonging to the church should never be given to the pagans to free him."

Seven months of captivity passed. The Vikings were encamped at Greenwich, on the banks of the Thames. The archbishop was threatened that if in eight days the stipulated ransom was not forthcoming, his life would be forfeited. On the vigil of Easter, 1012, the Danes held a great feast, and caused the archbishop to be brought into the hall where they were feasting. They loudly called on him to pay the ransom. Alphege firmly refused. "They might deal," he said, "with him as they pleased." "Silver and gold," runs the story, repeating the archbishop's brave words, "have I none; what I have will I freely give you—the knowledge of the one true God." The table of the revellers was strewn with great bones of oxen, the relics of their feast, and the savage Vikings were inflamed with wine. Someone threw at the pale, austere man who defied them, one of these ox-bones. The example of the half-drunk Viking was followed by a shower of bones and other missiles from the rest. The old man fell on the floor grievously hurt and writhing in great agony, but he was not dead. A Dane who stood by, named Thrym, a Christian owing his conversion to Alphege, was moved with pity when he looked on the poor battered form lying on the ground in the midst of the savage group of enemies, and seeing that the archbishop was wounded to death, resolved to put him out of his pain; lifting up his heavy battle-axe, with one blow he clave in twain the archbishop's skull.

When the effects of the wild carouse were passed, even the fierce Vikings felt remorse for their cruel deed. During his seven months' captivity among them, Alphege had done many a kindly action, and had won some, like Thrym the Viking, who had struck the merciful death-blow, to his Master's side. Without ransom, the body of the murdered archbishop was delivered up to his friends. It was brought with great ceremony, as the body of a martyr, to London, and with all honour was interred in the minster church of St. Paul. After ten years the remains of the martyred archbishop were taken from St. Paul's to the Danish king's royal barge, richly adorned and gilded, and, escorted by the chief members of Canute's court, were conveyed to Canterbury, where with all solemnity they were laid by the side of his illustrious predecessor, Dunstan. He received at once from the people of England the title and honours of a martyr, and subsequent writers have naturally surrounded his name with a halo of legendary miracles. The claim of Alphege to the martyr's title was rejected by his Norman successor Lanfranc; but posterity generally endorsed the decision of the gentler and more loving Anselm, who supported the claim of the English saint to be ranked among the "noble army," on the ground that Alphege

died in the cause of Christian forbearance and charity, declining to accept his life at the price of the plunder of his church and people.

Let us now consider more in detail the teaching of the "Homilies of Elfric." They are specially important because representing the *doctrine* of the Church of England—the strong Anglo-Saxon church, reformed and revivified by the influence of Dunstan and his powerful and earnest school. Important also because, *formally sanctioned* by the archbishop of Canterbury, Siric, these homilies must be looked upon as authoritative expositions of doctrine. They represented also, without doubt, the teaching of the greatest scholars and theologians of the age of Charlemagne and his imperial successor; and far on in our momentous story, we shall see how powerfully they influenced the opinions of the great English divines, at the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century.

It is not the historian's province to formulate any opinion on grave doctrinal questions. Thus, it is not his province to pronounce the views promulgated by Paschasius Radbertus, monk and abbot of the monastery of old Corbey, in Picardy, and subsequently endorsed and amplified by the Norman Lanfranc and the Roman school, erroneous and novel; nor to set forth in detail the refutation of these disputed views by the great Frankish scholars and divines, endorsed by archbishops Siric and Elfric and the Anglo-Saxon church as right and just, and as representing primitive Catholic orthodoxy. But it is the proper work of any historian of the Church of England to set forth plainly and without comment what a great church like the Anglo-Saxon church of Dunstan, Ethelwolf of Winchester, and Elfric the grammarian taught as authoritative doctrine; and to set it forth, as far as possible, in the simple words sanctioned by men who presided over that church and her fortunes.

In the Catholic church, for the first eight centuries, while the deepest reverence for the Body of Christ received in the Eucharist was general, no special attention was directed to the momentous question how far the reception of that Body was spiritual and heavenly, or carnal and natural. "This sacrament — the Eucharist — from the earliest times had withdrawn into the most profound mystery; it had been guarded with the most solemn reverence, shrouded in the most impressive ceremonial. It had become, as it were, the holy of holies of the religion, in which the presence of the Godhead was only the more solemn from the surrounding darkness. That presence had as yet been unapproached by profane and searching controversy, had been undefiled by canon, neither agitated before council, nor determined by pope. During all these centuries no language had been thought too strong to express the overpowering awe and reverence of the worshippers. . . . . Christ's real presence was in some indescribable manner in the Eucharist; but, under the notion of the real presence, might meet conceptions the most dissimilar, ranging from the most subtle spiritualism to the most gross materialism . . . ." It was the naked theory of Paschasius Radbertus, put out about

844, "which startled some of the more reflective minds." *

Somewhere about the year 826 this Paschasius Radbertus, a learned monk and teacher, and afterwards abbot of the religious house of old Corbey, in Picardy, was asked by a former pupil who was presiding over the daughter-house of new Corbey in Westphalia, to compile a treatise on the Eucharist for the instruction of the young scholars under his direction. The learned Benedictine, Mabillon, represents Radbertus' chief principles to be: (1) Christ's true body and blood are in the Eucharist; (2) the substance of bread and wine exist no longer after consecration; (3) the Body is no other than the one which was born of the Virgin Mary. From these propositions the monk of Corbey deduced the following consequences: that Christ is truly immolated in a mystery every day; that the Eucharist is both truth and figure; that it is not liable to digestion and other incidents of ordinary food. He does not use the famous word "transubstantiation." The first inventor of that name was a bishop Stephen,† who lived about a century before the fourth Council of Lateran, which first dogmatically established that doctrine in 1215.

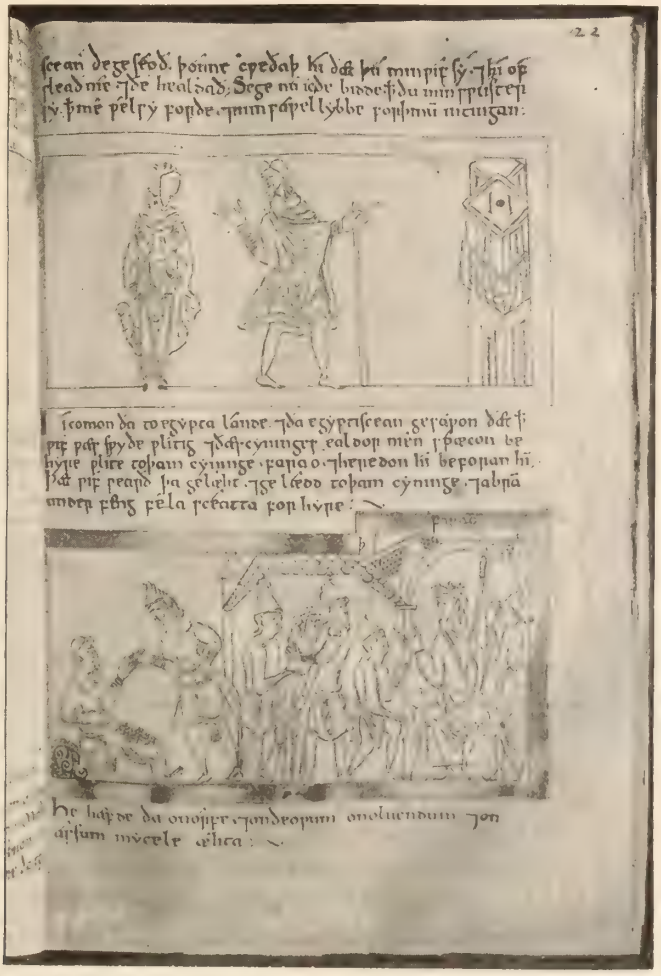
Radbertus' theory certainly differed from much that springs from the later Romish conception, by not allowing the possibility of eating Christ's body by wicked men; but he followed that Romish doctrine out into its grossest consequences —the miracles of the Host bleeding, assuming a human form, that of a child, etc. This treatise of Radbertus on so important a subject attracted considerable attention, and was presented to the Frankish sovereign, Charles le Chauve. Its propositions were soon hotly disputed by some of the most learned and accurate theologians of the age. Johannes Scotus Erigena, prominent among European scholars, addressed an attack upon it to Charles le Chauve, and Ratramn, another learned monk of Corbey, being commanded by the king to examine the work, wrote strongly against it. Among its earliest and most determined opponents was the distinguished archbishop of Mainz, Rabanus Maurus, whom Baronius speaks of as "profoundly learned," as the "brilliant star of Germany," and whom Bellarmine in similar laudatory terms does not hesitate to style a man "equally an example of piety and erudition." This strange Eucharistic controversy, which had such far-reaching consequences, was first agitating the minds of contemporary theologians in the days of Ethelwolf, Alfred's father, and during the times of the great Alfred. The chronology of the controversy may be stated roughly as follows:—Radbertus presented his treatise to the Frankish king about A.D. 844; the archbishop of Mainz wrote his famous treatise against it some time before his death in 856; Johannes Scotus Erigena controverted it about the middle or latter end of the ninth century; Ratramn probably during the latter half of the same century; while Elfric put forth his treatise about 995.

Elfric, the famous Anglo-Saxon writer and theologian, was no mythic person; and

* Milman: "Latin Christianity," book vi., chap. ii

† Stephen was Bishop of Augustodunum (Autun). The expression occurs in his book "De Sacramento Altaris," written about the year 1100, or a little later.

although considerable difference of opinion exists as to his later position in the church, we know sufficient respecting his early and middle life, in which period of his career most, if not all, of his important writings were composed and put out, to base our assertions respecting his careful theological training, and to establish our certain conclusions as to the English school of thought in which he was brought up. He was a scholar of the celebrated school of Ethelwold, bishop of Winchester, the favourite pupil of Dunstan at Glastonbury. Elfric alludes to his veneration for the stern old man Ethelwold, who, besides his great learning, was notorious for his abhorrence



PAGE FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT TRANSLATION OF ELFRIC, CONTAINING GEN. XII. 6–12, AND ILLUSTRATING THE STORY OF ABRAHAM AND HIS WIFE IN EGYPT.

(*Late 10th or early 11th century. British Museum.*)

of marriage among the clergy. After Ethelwold's days Alphege the martyr, archbishop of Canterbury, before he was translated to Canterbury, was bishop of Winchester, and by him Elfric was appointed abbot of the newly-founded monastery of Cerne, in Dorsetshire. It was in this period of his busy life that Elfric composed those "Homilies" and those two well-known Epistles, which exercised so undreamed-of an influence, centuries later, over the theology of the English Church. Amongst other writings of this great scholar and teacher was a Latin grammar, compiled in English, from which useful and popular work he obtained the title by which he is often called, "the Grammarian." He also wrote a "Life of Ethelwold," his old master, and a body of monastic discipline, etc.

It is subsequent to his holding the abbacy of Cerne that difference of opinion exists as to Elfric's further career. In this history we follow, concerning that career, the opinions adopted by the two responsible writers * who have given us the latest fruits of the long-protracted discussions on the subject. From the abbey of Cerne he was preferred to the little bishopric of Romsey, and from Romsey, on the death of his friend and patron, archbishop Siric, was translated to the archbishopric of Canterbury. This was in 989. He only held the arch-see for about five years, dying in 994. Other writers, among whom must be reckoned Mr. Soames, the scholarly historian of the theological writings of this important period, identify Elfric the grammarian with Elfric the archbishop of York. Save that the after-life of so distinguished a scholar and writer is a subject of interest to the historical student, the question whether Elfric the grammarian was archbishop of Canterbury, or of York, or whether he closed his useful life as abbot of a distant and little known monastery, is of no importance whatever in a theological point of view, and does not in the least affect the value of his famous theological pieces, or touch their authority. These were written evidently by a simple monk and priest, who had perhaps attained to the rank of abbot; but they were *formally sanctioned* by the scholarly archbishop of Canterbury, Siric, as authoritative documents to be used publicly in the Church of England. All other questions belong to a later period of Elfric's life.

The "Homilies" and the two "Epistles," as they are usually termed, are by far the most important of the works of Elfric. There are two volumes of these treatises or sermons, prepared for popular use; they consist of discourses on subjects chiefly Scriptural; much of them largely derived from writings of well-known fathers of the church, such as Augustine, Jerome, Bede, Gregory. Each volume contains forty homilies. These were transmitted to Siric, archbishop of Canterbury, for his consideration and approval, and an elaborate dedication of the first volume of these homilies to archbishop Siric is prefixed. It is somewhat long, but we give one or two interesting extracts. "In the name of the Lord, I, Elfric, a scholar of the benevolent and venerable prelate, Ethelwold (of Winchester), send greeting to our master in the Lord, archbishop Siric. . . . We have in this book given forty

* Dean Hook: "Lives of the Archbishops." Prof. Freeman: "Norman Conquest."

discourses [he is speaking of the first volume alone], thinking this sufficient for the faithful throughout the year if they be read through to them in the church by God's ministers. We have in hand indeed another book" [alluding to the second volume], and he advises "that one be read through in one year in God's church, and the other in the year following, that it be not tedious to the auditors." He winds up by saying, "I earnestly entreat your benignity, most benevolent father Siric, to deign to correct by your industry any blemishes or mischievous heresy or misty errors which you may discover."

To these homilies, when collected, Siric the learned archbishop of Canterbury gave the full weight of his sanction, and *desired them to be read in all the churches of the land.* They would probably have been forgotten now, however, but for the memorable one termed the "Paschal Homily," which has attracted in all times great attention, as showing what was the authoritative doctrine of the Anglo-Saxon church on the question which has exercised so many earnest and devout minds, respecting the nature of the Presence in the Eucharist. This Paschal Homily was used and largely adopted by the great Reformation teachers in the sixteenth century; and from its importance in the doctrinal history of the Church of England, we have judged well to give here some considerable extracts from it. Great use was made, by the learned composer, of the treatise on the same subject already written by Ratramn, the monk of Corbey, at the request of king Charles le Chauve of France, a little more than a century before.

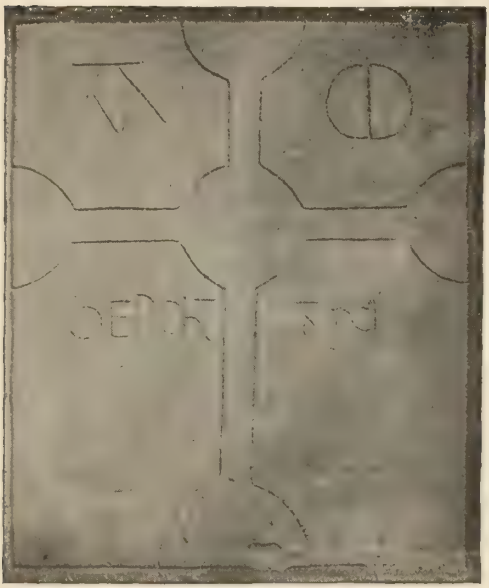
The more important passages in the homily are the following:—

"Certain men have often inquired, and yet frequently inquire, how the bread which is prepared from corn, and baked by the heat of fire, can be changed to Christ's body; or the wine which is wrung from many berries, can by any blessing be changed to the Lord's blood? Now we say to such men that some things are said of Christ typically, some literally. . . . He is called bread typically, and lamb and lion, and whatever else. . . . But yet, according to true nature, Christ is neither bread, nor a lamb, nor a lion. Why, then, is the holy housel [the sacrament] called Christ's body, or his blood, if it is not truly that which it is called? . . . Without, they appear bread and wine, both in aspect and in taste, but they are truly, after the hallowing, Christ's body and his blood, through a ghostly mystery. . . . If we behold the holy housel [the sacrament] in a bodily sense, then we see that it is a corrupt and changeable creature; but if we distinguish the ghostly might therein, then understand we that there is life in it, and that it gives immortality to those who partake of it with belief.

"Great is the difference between the invisible might of the holy housel (the sacrament) and the visible appearance of its own nature. By nature it is corruptible bread and corruptible wine, and it is, by the power of the divine word, truly Christ's body and his blood; not, however, bodily, but spiritually.

"Great is the difference between the body in which Christ suffered, and the body which is hallowed for housel [sacrament]. The body, verily, in which Christ

suffered was born of Mary's flesh, with blood and with bones, with skin and with sinews, with human limbs quickened by a rational soul; and his ghostly body, which we call housel [sacrament], is gathered of many corns; without blood and bone, limbless and soulless, and there is therefore nothing therein to be understood bodily,



TOMBSTONE OF A NUN, 10TH CENTURY. FROM A NUNNERY AT HARTLEPOOL (DURHAM CATHEDRAL).

(*From photo by C. P. MacCarthy, Esq.*)

but all is to be understood spiritually. . . . Verily Christ's body, which suffered death and from death arose, will henceforth never die, but is eternal and impassible. The housel [sacrament] is temporary, not eternal—corruptible. . . . . This mystery is a pledge and symbol; Christ's body is truth. This pledge we hold mystically, until we come to the truth, and then will this pledge be ended. But it is, as we before said, Christ's body and his blood, not bodily, but spiritually. Ye are not to inquire how it is done, but to hold in your belief that it is so done."

The concluding words of the above quotation from Elfric's "Paschal Homily" no doubt suggested the well-known paragraph which closes Hooker's masterly summary of the Church of England's conception of the doctrine of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; which, although written by him some three centuries ago, is still prized among us by learned and sober-minded scholars of our church, as on the whole the truest view of the great doctrine which we possess. "What these elements are in themselves it skilleth not; it is enough that to me which take them they are the body and blood of Christ; his promise and witness hereof sufficeth; his word he knoweth which way to accomplish. Why should any cogitation possess the mind of the faithful communicant but this, 'O my God, thou art true; O my soul, thou art happy.'" *

"We may perhaps in all this [work of Elfric] see the remaining influence of the great Theodore of Tarsus (archbishop of Canterbury 668–690); for in the Eastern church, though a change was unquestionably acknowledged after the consecration of the bread and wine, it was held to be of a mystical and sacramental nature, conformably to the teaching of her great doctors, Basil, Chrysostom, and Theodoret." †

Of Elfric's extant writings the Paschal

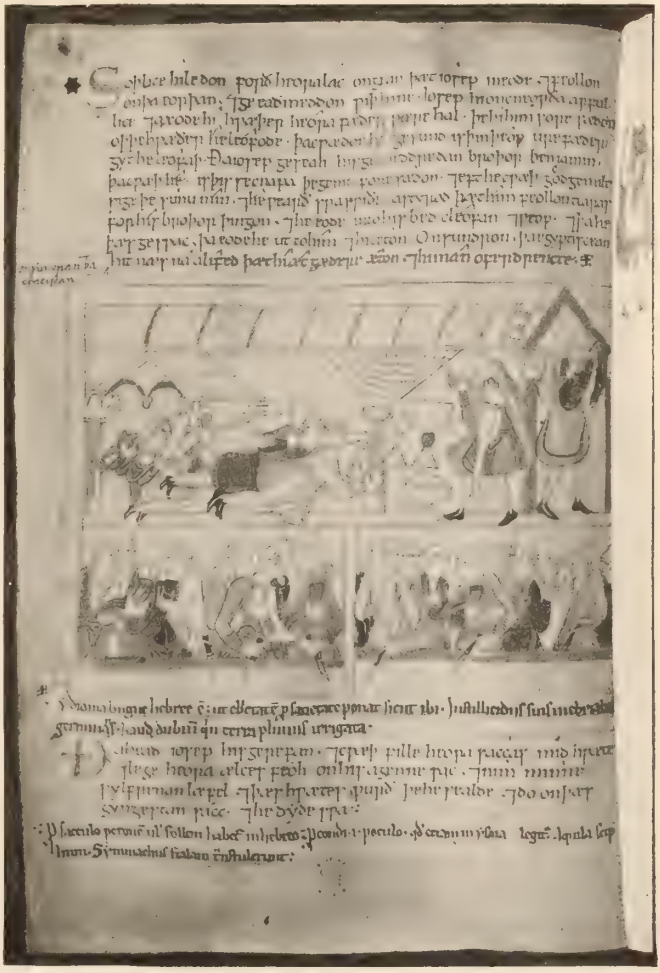
* "Ecclesiastical Polity," book v., chap. lxvii., 13.

† Dean Hook: "Lives of the Archbishops"—Elfric.

Homily is the most often quoted as expressive of the mind of the Anglo-Saxon church of Dunstan and his immediate successors, because it is an *authoritative* document, formally sanctioned by archbishop Siric, and desired by him to be read in all the churches of the land; but we possess even stronger, and if possible clearer expositions of his, of the momentous and anxiously disputed doctrine. The following passage occurs in his "Epistle," addressed to Bishop Wulfsine (of Sherborne), composed at that prelate's desire, and probably used by him as an episcopal charge to his clergy. It is known generally as "Epistola de Canonibus," and is a general account of such canonical regulations as the writer thought most material for the guidance of the clergy. In the course of this epistle occur the following words:—

"That housel [sacrament] is Christ's body, not bodily, but ghostly. Not the body which he suffered in, but the body of which he spake when he blessed bread and wine to housel a night before his suffering, and said by the blessed bread, 'This is my body,' and again by the holy wine, 'This is my blood, which is shed for many in forgiveness of sins.'"

Another important and most interesting passage of Elfric deserves to be quoted. It occurs in what is called Elfric's second



PAGE FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT TRANSLATION OF ELFRIC, CONTAINING GEN. XLIII. 25—XLIV. 2, ILLUSTRATING THE STORY OF JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN IN EGYPT.

(*Late 10th or early 11th century.*)

"epistle," which scholars believe was addressed to archbishop Wulfstan of York, and is entitled, "De secunda epistola quando dividitur Chrisma." "The

Lord which hallowed housel before his suffering, and saith that the bread was his own body, and that the wine was truly his blood; he halloweth daily, by the hands of the priest, bread to his body, and wine to his blood, in ghostly mystery; . . . and yet that lively bread is not, however, bodily the self-same body that Christ suffered in. Nor is that holy wine the Saviour's blood which was shed for us in corporeal reality. But in ghostly meaning both that bread is truly his body, and that wine also his blood, even as the heavenly bread which we call manna, that fed forty years God's people, and the clear water which did then run from the stone in the wilderness was truly his blood, as Paul wrote in one of his epistles: 'All our fathers ate in the wilderness the same ghostly meat, and drank the same ghostly drink: they drank of that ghostly stone, and that stone was Christ.' The apostle hath said, as you now have heard, that they all did eat the same ghostly meat, and they all did drink the same ghostly drink. And he saith, not bodily but ghostly. And Christ was not yet born, nor his blood shed, when that the people of Israel ate that meat, and drank of that stone. And the stone was not bodily Christ, though he so said.* It was the same mystery in the old law, and they did ghostly signify that ghostly housel of our Saviour's body which we consecrate now."

Some writers, acknowledging the weight of Elfric's authoritative testimony, have suggested that the great homilist, although a witness who cannot be set aside of the doctrine of the church of Dunstan and his school, must not be taken as a faithful expositor of the faith of the Anglo-Saxon church before the times of Dunstan. In reply to such suggestions, which have been gravely advanced, it must be remembered that the *first* determined opponents of the views and doctrine of Paschasius Radbertus, so clearly and decisively combated by Elfric in his homilies and epistles, were great and profound Frankish scholars, among whom we find the universally honoured names of Johannes Scotus Erigena, and the great archbishop of Mainz, Rabanus Maurus. It was *their* teaching which Elfric, in this question of the doctrine of the presence in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, closely followed. Johannes Scotus Erigena and archbishop Rabanus Maurus were either pupils or followers of *Alcuin*, Charlemagne's friend and adviser in all matters of education. And Alcuin was trained in the school of *York*, the principal theological school of the Anglo-Saxon church before the days of Alfred. Nor was Alcuin only a pupil of the York school; he became its master—its most famous master. Johannes Scotus Erigena and archbishop Rabanus Maurus, loved pupils or disciples of Alcuin, followed by Elfric in their teaching, therefore *represented the cherished traditions of York*, that most illustrious school of Anglo-Saxon theology, renowned not only in England, but throughout the length and breadth of the whole western Catholic Church. The teaching of Elfric was thus no novelty, devised in the days of Dunstan and his school, but was surely

* The word translated "*ghostly*," from the Anglo-Saxon of the above quoted passages in Elfric's epistles, it will be remembered, is rendered in our version of St. Paul's Epistles "*spiritual*," and the word *stone*, in our version of the New Testament is rendered *rock*.

inherited from the greatest days of the Anglo-Saxon church, from men like archbishop Egbert of York, who was Bede's disciple, and archbishop Albert, Egbert's pupil and illustrious successor.

While, however, the Eucharistic doctrine of that powerful and influential church of Dunstan and his school, based as it was on the traditions of Alcuin and the great school of York, has strongly commended itself in later ages to the fathers of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, who revised the formularies which declare the present teaching of the Church of England, there were some usages and doctrines in that Anglo-Saxon church which have since been condemned as mistaken; as resting neither upon Scriptural basis, nor even upon the known practice of the primitive church.*

The liturgy of the Anglo-Saxon church was in *Latin*. Much has been urged in favour of prayer and praise, ascending to the throne of God *in one language*—from the minsters of Canterbury and Paris, of Cologne and Rome. That the church of so many and such varying nationalities should use in their solemn services one tongue, one form of words, has been justly pressed as a triumphant and ever-present witness to the Unity of western Christendom. The universal use of the Latin tongue—the tongue of Rome—was also no doubt an indirect but powerful assistance to the gradually increasing pretensions of the bishops of that great see to a universal, though perhaps at first an undefined authority over all the churches of the west. And it is true that after the vigorous measures taken by king Alfred, and more especially after the widely extended facilities for education provided in the reforms of Dunstan and his school, Latin, which, king Alfred tells us, was a dead and almost unknown language among the ecclesiastics of his time, was by the majority of the clergy fairly well known. Still, outside the clergy and the monks, the large majority of the people were totally ignorant of the tongue.

To remedy this, men like Elfric provided Anglo-Saxon versions of the Lord's prayer, the creeds, and other important theological pieces; versions, paraphrases, and in some cases abridgments of many of the books of the Old Testament; and even homilies, in the native dialect, to be read in the place of sermons in public worship. "The teachers should tell the lay people the meaning of the prayers and creeds, that they may know *what* they are praying to God for, and *how* they should believe in God." And thus the danger, which arose from the fact of the liturgy being in a comparatively speaking unknown tongue, was among the Anglo-Saxons in some respects minimised and guarded against, by certain safeguards, which in later ages were too often unfortunately neglected.

Elfric's translation of parts of the Old Testament from the Latin, has already been noticed. It does not appear that any complete vernacular translation of the Scripture existed in the Anglo-Saxon church. The Bible was evidently considered as a Latin book, and texts were

* Notably the strange doctrine alluded to in Elfric's official writings, which asserted that the mass was profitable both to the living and the dead.

generally cited in that language, and then reproduced in the native idiom. The four Gospels, however, had been translated into Anglo-Saxon, perhaps as early as the eighth century. Elfric's work included the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, and some parts of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Esther, and Maccabees. The Latin version of St. Jerome was, no doubt, the version current in the church of Dunstan and his pupils.

A strict observance of Sunday was one of the notable characteristic features of the Anglo-Saxon church of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries. To this rigid observance of Sunday by our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, no doubt, is owing that reverent regard for the Christian Sabbath, which peculiarly distinguishes the England of the nineteenth century. Against desecration of that holy day we find not a few legislative enactments among the laws promulgated at different times by the kings of the line of Alfred. Among the various acts pronounced unlawful for the Sunday were washing of clothes, the working at any craft, baking bread, even trimming the hair. All household cares which are not necessarily of daily occurrence were forbidden. Any transgressor of these restrictions, it was declared, God would treat as an outlaw, denying him His blessing.

Besides the Lord's Day, certain conciliar authority in the time of the Anglo-Saxon kings of the tenth century enjoined the celebration of certain festivals hallowed in the church from immemorial antiquity. These included the holiday seasons of Easter, Whitsuntide, and Christmas ; two days in honour of the Blessed Virgin, one day in honour of Saints Peter and Paul, Michael the Archangel, John the Baptist, Saints Martin and Andrew ; and to these were added days to be kept in honour of martyrs and confessors peculiarly English, such as Gregory and Augustine, Edmund the Martyr the East Saxon king, Dunstan and Alphege, the archbishops. A day was even set apart in honour of king Edward the Martyr, Ethelred the Unready's brother, who would really seem to have possessed but scanty claim to the veneration of the English people.

Certain great fasts occurring four times each year were observed by Christian people with considerable rigour. The rule was that every person above twelve years of age was required to abstain from food until nones, or three o'clock in the afternoon.

The greatest care was taken in the election and consecration of bishops. On the death of a prelate, the principal inhabitants of a diocese, *both lay and clerical*, elected a successor. The original nomination might seem, however, to have rested with the crown. Having been chosen, the bishop-elect was examined by the prelates of the province as to the soundness of his belief. To his metropolitan, and to no other, the newly-appointed bishop swore canonical obedience. No obedience to the Roman see is alluded to in the earliest pontificals. The metropolitans—the archbishops—however, certainly received a pall from Rome ; and no doubt this acknowledgment of the recognised precedence of Rome in the case of the reception of the pall by the archbishop, eventually led to far more important concessions in the direction of

acknowledging the supremacy of Rome, after the Norman Conquest.

The Anglo-Saxon kings claimed, and usually exercised, the supreme direction of religious matters within their dominions. They made use of lofty titles, in later ages appropriated by the popes. The great king Edgar, no doubt with the full approbation of Dunstan, styled himself "the vicar of Christ;" and Edward the Confessor wrote himself down as "vicar of the Supreme King," and as such maintained that his duty called him to rule the church of God.

Originally, each of the separate kingdoms may be roughly said to have constituted a single see. In Kent we find Canterbury and Rochester in subordination to Canterbury. In Wessex the seat of the bishop was Dorchester in Oxfordshire; in Essex it was London; in Mercia it was Lichfield; in Northumbria it was York and Lindisfarne; in East Anglia it was Dunwich; in Sussex it was Selsey. These

A WITENAGEMOT (*p.* 466).

vast bishoprics were, as time went on, as we have already noticed, largely divided and multiplied. Thus, Wessex was divided into several sees — Winchester, Sherburne, Romsey, Wilton, Wells, etc. ; Mercia was divided into the dioceses of Sidnacester, Leicester, Hereford, Worcester, and Lichfield. In East Anglia the see of Elmham was added, and eventually it seems to have superseded Dunwich. In Northumbria several sees were carved out of the vast dioceses of York and Lindisfarne ; among them were Hexham and Ripon. But the Danish conquest in the ninth century swept away these ecclesiastical divisions, and York for a long period alone remained the seat of a see. In 995 Durham became the seat of the bishop of the northern part of Northumbria. At the time of the Norman conquest in 1066, there were in England, in all, two archbishops and thirteen bishops, Wilton and Sherburne having merged in Salisbury, and the two sees of Devonshire and Cornwall in Exeter. This list only roughly sketches out the main divisions of sees. Temporary arrangements from time to time seem to have been made. Some of them have been already detailed.

The archbishops and bishops sat in the great national council, the Witenagemot, and certain of the abbots were also associated with them. "An English prelate's right to occupy a legislative seat in the great council of the nation has descended to him from a long line of predecessors, and is thus founded on the most venerable of national prescriptions. It is no privilege derived from that Norman policy which converted episcopal endowments into baronies. It is far more ancient than the Conqueror's time, being rooted amidst the very foundations of the monarchy." *

Great care and pains were exercised only to admit properly prepared persons to ordination. We have before noticed that it is evident among the priests of the Anglo-Saxon church—we are specially speaking of the church after the time of Alfred—there were numbered not a few men of the higher ranks in society, and it is probable that the sacred profession was much sought after. Each candidate for ordination was required to spend a month under the bishop's examination and instruction. During this time he was evidently not the bishop's guest, for a curious regulation required the candidate to take care to provide himself with sufficient provision in food and fodder, "that he be not troubled about any of these things while he was under examination."

That some real learning was required of the candidate, beyond mere technical knowledge of the fasts and feasts, of baptism and the mass, is evident ; for we read "that if he come to the bishop with the instruction of a teacher, then he is the nearer ordination." This would seem to indicate that a training at some recognised school, such as was Glastonbury, Abingdon, and later, Winchester, was expected and desired. All candidates were required to give evidence as to the soundness of their belief ; to show a knowledge of the ceremonies connected with, as well as the signification of the various parts of the divine service ; they were especially called on to show what they understood by

* Soames : "Anglo-Saxon Church," chap v.

baptism, and how they comprehended the signification of the mass.

After ordination, the priest was discouraged from wandering from church to church. "No priest was *of his own accord* to leave the church to which he was ordained." Any interference within the district of brother priests was forbidden. Among the duties expected of him, the education of youth is specially mentioned. All this points to the fact that every effort was made to ensure a strict discipline, and to provide at all events a fairly learned body of men to minister in the churches and minsters. The reproaches of Alfred respecting the deplorable ignorance of the clergy of his time, had evidently sunk deep into the hearts of leading clergymen.

Among the priests of the Anglo-Saxon church of the tenth and eleventh centuries, celibacy was recommended with great earnestness; but, except in the case of stern disciplinarians and rigid ascetics like Ethelwold of Winchester, was evidently not sternly enforced. Gentle interpretation of a rule which was evidently felt to be too much for human nature in general, seems to have been certainly the policy of Dunstan. There is no doubt that all the leading ecclesiastics pressed the celibate state as the true ideal for the priesthood. Their counsels, however, were certainly disregarded by a large proportion of the rank and file of the clergy. Elfric, for instance, one of the greatest and most popular of Anglo-Saxon teachers, in one of his writings does not hesitate to speak of clerical marriages as "proofs of folly," and alludes to "wise mass-priests who lived in cleanness," by which strong expression he means celibacy. The "holy church," he tells us, "loveth such." But such words seem to imply that they were rather in the minority, and Dunstan's wise policy, as we have seen, seems to have aimed at holding up an unmistakable ideal, while yet recognising that inability to attain it must be recognised and tenderly dealt with.

As in the present Roman custom, the church of Dunstan and Elfric used a gradation of inferior ministers, and pronounced ecclesiastical orders to be the following seven:—*ostiary* (doorkeeper), *reader*, *exorcist*, *acolyte*, *sub-deacon*, *deacon*, *priest*. The deacon, however, with the priest, alone baptised, and administered the Eucharist.

Marriage among the Anglo-Saxons was a very solemn ceremony, and not lightly to be dissolved. The mass-priest was to pronounce a solemn blessing at the nuptial rite, unless one or both the parties had been married before, in which event—although the church did not forbid the second marriage—the priest's blessing was withheld. Marriage was forbidden within four degrees of consanguinity. Men were forbidden to marry a divorced woman. Divorce, by the Council of Hertford, was forbidden save "fornicationis causâ," and then the man was bound, "as he valued the name of a Christian," to live single ever afterwards. The ascetic tendency of the ecclesiasticism of that age is shown by the fact that all second marriages, *in any event*, were discouraged by the church.

Trial by *ordeal* was not uncommon in the tenth and eleventh centuries. It undoubtedly came from the pagan ancestors of the Anglo-Saxons. The word "ordeal" is apparently a northern word signifying

judgment. In the Anglo-Saxon laws the ordeal signifies not the trial, but the heated iron or other instrument used in the trial. The old pagan custom was continued under Christian forms, and the solemn trial was usually conducted in the church. The red-hot iron taken in the hand was the most common form which was used in this strange, half-pagan, half-Christian custom. It is generally supposed to have continued in practice until the third year of the reign of king Henry III.

The most usual of the forms of ordeal—the carrying of red-hot iron—was conducted as follows. On the day of his trial, the accused received the Eucharist and declared his innocence upon oath. The iron having been heated in the church—in the presence of witnesses—the accused, with his hand, removed the red-hot iron from a supporter. He then carried it for about three feet, and threw it down. His hand was at once bound and sealed up. On the third day the bandage was removed. It has been suggested that the skin was in most cases prepared for the momentary contact with the glowing metal. Other forms of trial by ordeal, such as walking over red-hot ploughshares, the being cast into water bound with a rope, were less common. These ordeals were forbidden on Sundays and saints' days.

The Roman Church ever discouraged the trial by ordeal, and it was no doubt owing to such discouragement that this strange custom was discontinued.

* Compare generally upon this chapter—Soames "Bampton Lectures," vii.; also Soames' "Latin Church," chap. xi.; and his "Anglo-Saxon Church," chap. iv.; and the appendices to these works.

SAXON LADIES OF THE 9TH AND 10TH CENTURIES.

(*From a MS. in the British Museum. Strutt's "Habits and Dress of the People of England."*)

EXCURSUS A.

CONTEMPORARY AUTHORITIES FOR THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF BRITAIN IN THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH CENTURIES.

(1) *Gildas* is the earliest prose historian of Britain of whom anything remains. The genuineness of his "Historia" and "Epistola"—really a single work, for the "Epistola" is but a very short introduction to the larger "Historia"—may be now looked upon as established. He is usually spoken of as Gildas the Wise, and was born, according to the usually received dates, about A.D. 516, some assert in Wales, and to have written his history A.D. 556–560, and to have died A.D. 570. Another tradition gives the place of his birth in Strathclyde (Cumberland), and relates how he was the son of one of the native British princes of North Britain, and the brother of the famous bard, Aneurin. He is generally supposed to have died in Armorica (in Gaul), and to have been buried in the cathedral of Vannes. Gildas is associated with David and Cadoc or Cathmael, as the British missionary leaders who principally influenced the formation of the ritual and doctrines of the church in Ireland, in the period following the death of St. Patrick and the first period of the conversion of the Irish people.

(2) *Nennius.*—Personally, little is known of this very early writer. Tradition relates that he was a monk of the Welsh Bangor, and that he escaped from the great massacre of the monks of that famous monastery, A.D. 613. It is clear that his compilation in its earliest form was probably of the seventh century—a century following the date assigned to the work of Gildas. There is an ancient Irish version of his history.

(3) *The Venerable Bede* was born A.D. 673 in Northumbria, probably in the village of Jarrow, on the River Tyne; at the age of seven years was placed under the tutelage of the abbot Benedict of Wearmouth. When, in A.D. 682, the "House of Paul," at Jarrow, was founded, Bede accompanied Ceolfrid, its first abbot, and never quitted the holy house; he died there A.D. 735. His remains, until the reign of Henry VIII., in a gorgeous shrine of gold and silver incrusted with gems, were preserved in Durham Cathedral. The life and work of this great saint and scholar has been given with some detail in the text.

(4) The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (of this some account is given on p. 403). Some of the early contemporary "entries" were also quoted as illustrations of the Northmen's conquest.

(5) The Bardic Poems, under the names of Taliesin, Aneurin, and Llywarch-Hên, are ascribed to the seventh century.

For many years these ancient Bardic poems, which have been quoted as illustrative of Christian belief in Britain during the period of the invasion of the Northmen, have been carefully examined with a view to testing whether or no they were really the work of writers who lived at the time, or in the times immediately succeeding the great conquest of the North-folk of the sixth century.

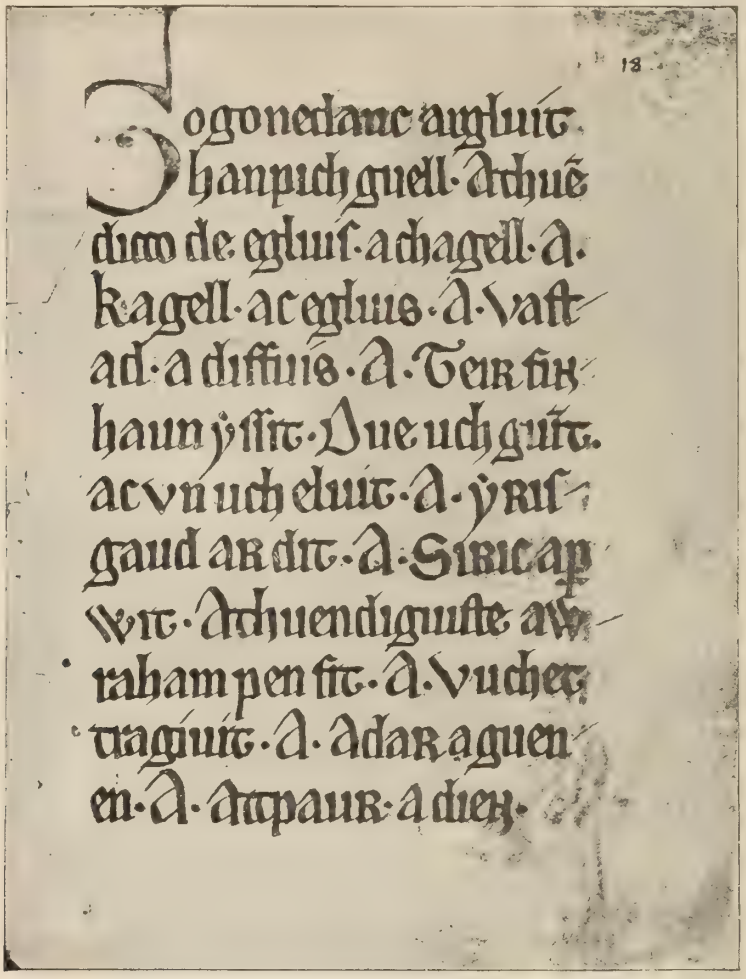
More than half a century ago the Anglo-Saxon historian, Sharon Turner, was firmly convinced that a large proportion of these ancient poems belonged to that far-back age when the disasters, of which they sung, were actually happening. His dissertation is an important contribution to the subject, and to many of the arguments therein advanced, those who doubt the genuineness of the poems and would ascribe them to a later date, have never even attempted to reply. Since his days serious historians like Dr. Guest and Mr. Green have used certain of these "songs" as authentic documents, important as throwing light upon an eventful period which possesses very little contemporary history. The eminent French scholar in Celtic literature, M. Villemarqué, is equally convinced of the trustworthiness of much contained in these curious and interesting remains.

But the most important work on these remains of sixth and seventh century folk-lore, is the text and translation of these ancient Bardic poems in the "Four Ancient Books of Wales." Dr. Skene, the late Historiographer Royal of Scotland, a leading Celtic scholar of our day, in an introduction to this great work, after a searching examination of these poems, pronounces that through the clearly historical poems there runs a date which is indicated in the poem itself, which is nearly the same in all, and is comprised in the first sixty years of the seventh or in the later years of the immediately preceding century, and decides that they were written by men, contemporaries of the heroes whose deeds were sung in the songs.

Dr. Skene sums up his estimate by placing these historic poems in the seventh century. He considers that they refer mainly to the story of the resistance of the Britons to the invasions of the Engle (or Angle) tribes in the northern districts of

happened all through the sixth, and through part of the seventh century, being finally brought into shape and assuming a consistent form in the same seventh century.

The most ancient known text of these poems is



PAGE FROM THE BLACK BOOK OF CARMARTHEN.
(*By permission of W. K. M. Wynne, Esq., Penarth.*)

the island; and he thinks that through the clash and jar of contending races a body of popular poets grew up, and that the events of the never-ending war were reflected in national lays in which the deeds of the British warriors were celebrated; these popular lays, treating of events which

found in a well-known MS., viz., in the Black Book of Carmarthen, written in the reign of king Henry II., A.D. 1154–1189; in the book of Aneurin, written in the latter part of the thirteenth century; in the book of Taliesin, a MS. of the beginning of the fourteenth century; and in the

Red Book of Hergest, written at different times in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The poems generally appear, in so far as the orthography and verbal forms are concerned, in the garb of the period when the MS. was transcribed. Referring to this, Dr. Skene observes, "that the scribes of those times had not the spirit of the antiquaries of the present, which leads them to preserve the exact spelling and form of any ancient document they may print. When such documents were handed down orally, those who recited them did not do so in the older forms of an earlier period, but in the language of their own. The reciters and the hearers both wished to understand the historic and national lays they were dealing with; and the reciter no more thought it necessary, in transcribing them from older MSS., to preserve their more ancient form, than he did in reciting them orally to preserve any other form of the language than the one in which he heard them repeated. In Welsh MSS. there had been at intervals great and artificial changes in the orthography, and the scribe was no doubt wedded to the orthographic system of the day." *

The *internal* evidence of the genuineness and great antiquity of these poems is very strong. We may very briefly instance the following peculiarities.

The position occupied by the hero-king Arthur in these British lays is a peculiar one. Out of this large body of poems there are only five which mention him at all; and in these the hero-king is not commemorated as environed with that surpassing glory with which his figure appears to us in the well-known cycle of poems of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, of which the central idea is the Arthurian romance. Arthur is simply mentioned by our bards with respect, but not with wonder, as one of the national champions, but by no means the principal and favourite hero of the people.

Again, had these poems been put out under the honoured names of the seventh century bards, in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, would the troubadour, or the trouvère of the brilliant court of Henry II., and somewhat later of the court of Henry III., have chosen as the subject of their poems and lays such a theme as the comparatively unknown war celebrated in the long Gododin poems, the scene of which lay in the north of Britain, and the modern Lowlands of Scotland, or have sung of such forgotten chiefs as Caeawg, Mynyddawg, Urien, and Cyndylan?

Once more, the spirit which lives all along the pages of these sad poems is a spirit of utter melancholy and hopeless mourning. Such a tone would be utterly inconceivable in a poet or songman of a later age. It could only belong to the age which suffered from the woes depicted in the poem or the lay. The heroic lives and splendid deeds of daring of gallant chieftains—whose names, with one or two exceptions, were utterly unknown when the poets who lived subsequent to, or in a period shortly preceding, the Norman Conquest, wrote—are commemorated. But it is of the death of these noble heroes, and of the utter defeat of their followers that the Bardic poet sings. No single victory ode lights up this sombre collection of minstrelsy. Then, too, the faults and errors of the vanquished people are freely dealt with, with an unsparing hand. Their want of discipline and order, owing largely to the curse of excessive indulgence in the fatal mead-drink, is again and again noticed in terms of the sharpest censure, mingled with the most hopeless regret. All the softer and more winning features of life are wanting in these saddest of songs. No tales of love and courtship, such as the poets of the twelfth and following centuries delight in, are found here. The poems are, for the most part, battle songs, but the battles, one and all, are disastrous scenes of utter ruin and hopeless rout. They seem exactly to reproduce what evidently took place during the years of the awful conquest of Britain by the North-folk.

There is nothing in these ancient British poems which can fairly leave the critic to suppose that they are the work of a later age; nothing to disturb the deliberate impression of those eminent scholars and writers above quoted, that many of the ancient poems contained in the four MSS. in question, "The Four Ancient Books of Wales," are what they profess to be—remnants of folk-songs inspired by the crushing national disasters which followed the invasions of the Northmen in the sixth and seventh centuries, and which resulted in the complete subjugation of Britain by the Anglo-Saxon peoples.

The poems of a later date contained in these MSS. are for the most part clearly indicated by the subject matter, and generally by unmistakable references to more recent times.

* "The Four Ancient Books of Wales," chapter xi.

EXCURSUS B.

ON THE WORD "MASS."

We are constantly using the word "mass." So Elfric, in his epistle delivered at the distribution of chrism, begins thus: "O, ye mass-priests, brethren." Some confusion of thought is connected with the famous expression. Anciently the word "missa," English "mass," was often used in a plural form. We not unfrequently in old writers come upon the expression, "Missarum solemnia"; this seems to have meant no more than *Prayer publicly sent forth, or sent up to God.* "Missarum solemnia" may be, then, fairly translated, "The solemn offices of religion." As a general name of every part of the divine service, we find the term "missa" (mass), even used for the *lessons* from Scripture. In the rule of St. Benedict, for instance, it is used for the prayers which are commonly called *collects.*

An entire service was also termed "missa"—for instance, "missa nocturna" signifies *the morning prayers and psalmody before day*; the same term, "missa," is also used for *evening prayers*; the "missa catechumenorum" is the expression for the *service of the catechumens*, which includes the sermon and the whole ante-communion service. Again, the "missa fidelium" means *the communion service*—peculiar to communicants only. The derivation and primitive signification of the word "missa" or "missæ" (mass), is much disputed. The favourite derivation is from the words, "Ite missa est," the formula which, from ancient times, was used in the Latin church at the end of the service for *the dismission of the people.* This is the opinion of great ritualists like Isidore and Rabanus Maurus, and is repeated by the learned Benedictine Mabillon. Another and interesting derivation, though not supported by like ancient authority, is that "missa" or "missæ" simply meant, in the first instance, "any public prayer *sent up* to God." Except in rare instances, the term "missa" was not used in the Greek church. It may be said to belong exclusively to *Latin* Christianity. As time went on the term "missa" (mass) came only to mean one special service, that of the communion. Thus this particular service monopolised a name which once had been common to other services.

It was the later practice in the church—later because it certainly does not seem to have been in vogue for the first six centuries—of celebrating "private masses," which has invested the word "mass" with new associations not belonging originally to the expression. Private masses were of two kinds. The *first* was for the most part a private commemoration by the priest, and not a communion. The *second* arose from the persuasion that the representation of the memorials of the precious death of Christ is acceptable to God for the sake of that atoning death, and so draws down His favour upon the whole church, as well as upon those who partake in the celebration. This notion of drawing down God's favour upon the whole church came gradually to include the spirits of departed friends, as being still a part of the communion of saints. Nor was this all. For instance if a soldier went to battle, masses might be said for his success or his safety. If a man were sick, masses might be said for his recovery.

At one time, in the Reformation of the sixteenth century, Luther and Melancthon and the German states appear to have been willing to retain the name and the service of the "mass," if only they might have abolished "private masses." Private masses were certainly celebrated in the church of Dunstan and his school. The Anglo-Saxon race were an intensely religious people, and the framework of their society was religious. Clubs, associations, guilds, or sodalities, as they were termed, were common in the nation. These clubs were founded for mutual protection and assistance in trouble, but a religious colour was indelibly stamped upon these associations owing to the existence among them of the custom to provide soul-shot, as it was called, on the death of every member of the association or guild, in order that the soul of the departed brother might enjoy the full benefit of the mass of the church. Masses, too, were constantly said for the souls of the surviving members of the guild. This guild idea—which included "masses" for the living and the dead—was gradually adopted by religious houses, certainly soon after the Norman conquest, probably at an earlier date. Several of such houses would join together in these prayer unions, and when a brother of one of these houses included in such a prayer-guild died, masses would be celebrated for the soul of the departed in each of the confederated communities.

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